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DEADWOOD DICK TORE OPEN HIS SHIRT AND EXPOSED THE BRAND OF A HORSESHOE.

OR,
RED ROVER
AT
Powder Pocket.

BY ED. L. WHEELER.
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.
THE GREAT HOLD-UP.

TOOT!
"What's the mischief?" cried the fireman.

He sprang to his box and looked ahead, and in the center of the track, where the train was rounding a point of rocks, saw a red flag.

"That fool of a section boss has got another rail up, on our time, I suppose, as he did once before," growled the engineer, having shut off steam and applied the air brakes.

Toot!

Another short, sharp blast of the whistle, and the engineer reversed his engine, while the fireman leaped down and prepared to jump.

Both had beheld something well calculated to chill their blood, the moment the engine had rounded the bend far enough to give them a view of the straight stretch ahead!

About half way down to a point where the track again curved, a number of boulders had been placed between the rails, and on both sides of the track stood masked men with rifles in their hands. That they meant business was not to be questioned.

"Held up, by thunder!"

Such was the exclamation uttered by the engineer, as he reached for the whistle and sounded the second alarm, and, having reversed, as mentioned, he, too, prepared to jump.

But that was not necessary. As if the train robbers had calculated to the foot the distance from the curve at which to place the obstruction, they saw the train slow up, under the force of the powerful brakes, and when the engine stopped the nose of the pilot was but a score of inches from the boulders.

"Hands up, or take lead straight!"

So cried the leader, and a man on each side of the engine covered the engineer and fireman.

Needless to say, they promptly obeyed the order. At the same moment other members of the band made a dash for the express-car, which was next to the engine.

Still others had sprung up alongside the track the moment the train came to a standstill, and boarded the cars to take care of the passengers while the leader and those with him made their raid upon the car which contained the treasure they were after.

But, were they after any special treasure, or was it only a coincidence that they had chosen that particular train for their prey?

It looked the former.

"Looks like we're in for it," observed the fireman, as he held his hands on high.

"That's what it does," agreed the engineer, in easy manner of speech, taking care to keep his hands well up. "There is no use kicking when they have got us lined with Winchesters."

"That's hoss sense," averred one of the raiders, who stood guard over them. "You fellers keep yer hands straight up, and you won't come to no harm. We don't want to harm nobody, ef we kin help it, so you mind what ye've been told and ye won't git hurt."

"Who is your captain?" inquired the engineer.

"Captain Joaquin."

"The deuce you say! That settles it. Tom," to the fireman. "We had better keep right on reachin' skyward."

"Et won't be healthy fur ye ef ye don't," they were again warned. "Captain Joaquin is after the funds of the Castleville Bank, and he is bound to have 'em at any cost."

"The Castleville National Bank?"

"Jist so."

"What have we got to do with the funds of the bank? Does he think they are in the express safe to-day?"

"He don't think it; he knows it."

"But, he is dreaming. What would the bank's funds be on our train for?"

"The bank has closed up its business, to take effect at noon to-day, and the capital is on its way to San Francisco. But, it will never get thar."

Perhaps the engineer and fireman did not notice it, but the Western twang and mannerism of this man's speech were forced; it was evident that his natural speech was correct—that he was no border tough.

"Well, I guess nobody knew it," the engineer commented.

"Oh, yes; Captain Joaquin knew of it," assured the man, with a light laugh.

No more was then said, the engineer and fireman giving their attention to what was going on at the express car.

The messenger had refused to open the door when ordered to do so, and had already killed one man and wounded another, firing through the barred ventilator close up under the roof.

The robbers were preparing to use dynamite.

Back in the cars the others were holding up the passengers, but without any attempt at robbing them.

This, of itself, was proof that the express car was the objective point; they meant to risk nothing by attempting to make the robbery general.

By some accident, or by some passenger daring all to take the initiative, the robbers might lose control in one of the cars, and if that happened, and they kept the people in the cars together, they might be successful in beating the robbers off.

On the other hand, one man standing just within each door, with a cocked and leveled Winchester in hand, and his finger on the trigger, they had all the advantage in their favor, and might hold it as long as they desired.

Thus matters stood in the coaches, while events in the vicinity of the express car were coming to a climax.

Among the travelers in the smoking-car was one whom we must notice. About thirty years of age, he had keen, dark eyes, and hair that partook of the same shade and fell in a wave upon his shoulders.

He had a graceful mustache, and his regular features made him rather more than passably good-looking.

He was simply, almost roughly, clad.

At the first sound of the whistle he had started up, and had seemed to take an interest.

At the next alarm a couple of guns sprang to his hands, and he called on the others in the smoker with him to prepare for a possible attempt at robbery.

There were, perhaps, a score of men in that car.

Some of them drew guns, but when the train stopped and the masked men with their Winchesters appeared, the sight took all the bravery out of them.

The young man we have described, like the others, after a hasty look around to see what the others were doing, raised his hands, but the weapons remained close beside him on the cushion.

They were not allowed to leave their seats; all that was required of them was to sit still and keep their hands in sight.

This they did.

But there was a grim look on the face of the man described, as if he wanted only half an opportunity to act.

In all the cars the situation was the same, and presently to their ears came the sound of an explosion that could be felt as well as heard. The express car had been blown open.

Immediately following the explosion the report of a pistol rang out in the smoker, and the robber nearest the rear door dropped in his tracks. Another, and the one in front dropped his rifle and uttered a howl of pain, and all the men in the car looked in astonishment.

There stood the man we have mentioned, with both of his weapons in his grasp. So lightning quick had he acted that no one had detected him in the act until the shots were fired.

But he did not remain inactive.

"Follow me!" he called out to the others. "Back me up, and we will beat them off and cheat them yet. We are ten to their one, and they'll be too rattled to shoot straight."

He ran for the rear door, even while speaking, and some three or four made bold to follow him, with pistol in hand, but for the most part they hung back like cowards. Straight to that door, and out, and into the next car, where two more of the robbers were stationed.

Opening the door suddenly, this man clapped his revolver behind the ear of one of these, and commanded him to drop his gun, which, at the touch of the cold tube, the fellow promptly did. The other, however, at the other end of the car, brought his rifle up to his shoulder and gave warning that he was going to fire.

Before he could do so, however, for it required aim to avoid hitting his comrade, the traveler had thrown one arm around the neck of the robber he had disarmed, and, in a twinkling, let fly a snap shot from behind that living barricade and placed the fellow at the other end of the car hors de combat. The passengers sprang to their feet with a cheer, and it looked as if they were going to get the upper hand.

CHAPTER II.

DICK'S FRUITLESS RISK.

Deadwood Dick, Junior!

He it was who had, at the risk of his life, made this break to cheat the train-robbers.

"Follow me, every man of you who has a gun!" he called out to them. "We can do these fellows up in short order, if we go for them in the right manner. Who is with me?"

There was another cheer at that.

"We're with you to a man!" some one shouted. "You lead the way, and see if we ain't."

"All right! Follow me, but if I go down, don't let that check you; go right on and you will run clear over them by force of numbers. Now, then, here we go for them!"

With that, Dick dashed out of the door and leaped to the ground, his brace of revolvers in hand ready to do execution.

He began firing the moment he touched the ground.

Two other fellows had followed, but, at the return fire from the outlaws, one of these fell dead and the other lost the use of an arm by a bullet.

Dick himself had the closest kind of a call, a bullet zipping past his face so close that he felt it touch his skin, taking away a strand of his long hair in its flight.

But that did not stop him even for an instant. Two men had already gone down before him, and now a third, and, had he been supported, the victory would have been easy; but those who had cheered the loudest were the first to draw back, when they saw the others drop.

They hesitated, drew back, and then dived into the cars again as if it were raining bullets without, and dauntless Dick Bristol was left entirely alone and unsupported.

Hearing the outlaws yell, Dick looked back and realized his position.

Without turning to look the other way again, for that would have been to lose a fraction of a second of opportunity, he dropped to the ground and almost the same instant came the sharp crack of three or four rifles.

For a moment there he lay; then his revolvers cracked, bringing out at least one cry of pain. Again he was on his feet, dashing for the nearest car. Once more he dropped, not because he saw any one aiming at him, but because he knew they had had just time to do so.

Very true guess, for the rifles spoke out, and again he had escaped their bullets.

Upon the instant, another leap carried him to the platform, and for the time being he was safe.

"Curse you for the cowards you are!" he cried, facing his fellow-passengers. "Why did you not back me up as you promised? We had them dead to rights then, had you but done your part!"

"And they would now have us dead," argued one of the timid ones, "the same as that poor fellow they did drop."

"And whose death counts for nothing, because you did not take advantage of the moment," retorted Dick, hotly.

Dick Bristol was disgusted.

Outside the cars, now, at a sufficient distance to command a good view, men were watching for the appearance of a head.

The same trick could not be repeated; the advantage once lost was lost for good and all, and Fighting Dick's chagrin was great to think that he had risked so much and gained so little.

"And for whose death you are responsible," rejoined the one who had spoken before.

"Not so much as are you," cried Dick.

"It was not I who led the foolhardy attack," the retort.

"We are all well aware of that," sneered Dick. "You were too much a coward even to follow."

"You mean I had too much good sense."

"I mean what I said."

"Then you lie!"

Smack!

That man was stretched his full length the same instant.

"A little too much, that, when I risked my life to lead you to an attack that would have been a success if you had only supported me. There is no good reason why those fellows should not be our prisoners this minute!"

No one else ventured to dispute the point, and the fellow Dick had flogged got slowly up, nursing an injured eye, and went muttering to a seat and sat down, while Dick paced up and down the car aisle, like a caged tiger. For a leader so intrepid, the defeat was crushing.

In the mean time the looting of the express-car had been successfully accomplished.

The car was a strong one, built without end doors, and calculated to withstand a severe siege, but it was not, of course, proof against dynamite.

The messenger had made a good defense, but, after the explosion, which shattered the side door and made a huge rent in the side of the car, it was found that he had been killed by a piece of the flying iron.

"Served him right!" cried Captain Joaquin. "If he had opened the door in the first place we wouldn't 'a' harmed him."

"They will never learn sense," from one of his men.

"He never will; that's certain."

They bounded into the car, a sledge was used to open the safe, and therein was found the treasure they were after.

There were several packages of bills, each marked \$10,000, and each securely tied and sealed. These Captain Joaquin seized upon immediately, and crammed into a bag which hung by a strap from his shoulder.

"Is that all?" asked his men.

"Don't see anything more, do you?" he demanded.

"Not here; but the passengers may pan out well if we run 'em through the mill."

"To Hades with the passengers! What do we want with them after this rich haul? But, hold on! There is one of them that I want and must have."

"You want a particular passenger?" demanded one of the men, in amaze.

"Yes, I want but one particular person."

"Which one?"

"The fellow who killed Charlie and Bill, and almost stampeded the train. I know him, and he shall pay dearly for it. Besides, he is a chap that we want out of our way, anyhow."

"Why, who is he, captain?"

"Only Deadwood Dick, Junior, is all."

"Deadwood Dick!"

The little that could be seen of their faces, beneath their masks, proved that more than one of them went pale on hearing that name spoken.

"Nobody else, and he is our mutton now, and we'll make him the sickest man in seven counties before we get done with him. He has been after us long enough; now we'll hunt the man-hunter to his doom."

"Hurrah! that is the talk, captain!"

The captain leaped out of the car, the others after him, and Captain Joaquin shouted to the men on the engine:

"Hold those two fellows under strict cover, boys, until I give you the word; then get down and let them go. I'll be done in a minute, now; soon as I get a man."

"All right, captain!"

"Come on, boys!"

The leader ran in the direction of the smoker, the others at his heels, save those who were standing guard around the train, and leaping up the steps he boldly entered.

Deadwood Dick was sitting sullenly in his seat, having deposited his valuables in the legs of his boots, and would not lift a finger to defend the passengers who had failed to support him at the critical moment.

He did not know what was coming, else he could have picked Captain Joaquin off easily as he entered the door.

"Hands up!" shouted the captain.

His own revolver and half a dozen more over his shoulders covered the whole company.

Up went their hands, Deadwood Dick's among the rest, and all expected the usual course of proceedings to follow; but in that they were mistaken.

"Don't be alarmed, gentlemen," called out the leader. "I don't want your tin this time; I am after the chap who led the insurrection in this car awhile ago. Deadwood Dick, Junior, rise up and surrender, or we will fill you full of lead where you sit! Take your choice."

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN JOAQUIN'S CAPTURE.

"Deadwood Dick, Junior!"

The name was upon the lips of all the passengers, instantly.

They looked in Dick's direction, as he rose up as ordered, and the look on their faces would be hard to describe.

"Here I am!" responded Dick, in his firm manner. "If these passengers are willing to let you take me, so be it; I shall not kick. Better that I should surrender than that any one should get hurt, I suppose."

"Some one would get hurt if you didn't surrender, that is a certainty," Captain Joaquin declared.

The passengers were pale, and no one offered to defend the gallant Richard of the Lion Heart.

"Well, here I am."

Dick was as cool as Captain Joaquin himself, and stood awaiting the pleasure of that notorious outlaw.

"Do you happen to have a pair of handcuffs with you?"

"Yes, a couple of pairs."

"One will answer the purpose. Let's have 'em, and one of my men will see how they will fit you."

"Just a word first."

"What is it?"

"What do you intend doing with me?"

"That is something you will learn all in good time. Come! the handcuffs!"

"If it is your intention to kill me, I may as well die right here as anywhere; if you intend to give me a chance for my life, all right."

"Don't shoot here!" called out a timid passenger.

"It would be a good thing to do a little of it for your especial benefit," Dick declared ironically.

"No, don't resist, but go with 'em peaceably," the passenger urged. "It is better that one should make a sacrifice than that all should come to grief," he argued.

Dick and Captain Joaquin laughed.

"I intend to give you a show," said the latter. "Come, there is no time to fool away!"

Dick Bristol saw that there was only one chance for him. He knew that to hesitate ten seconds would mean his death. He was in a death-trap, and the dead-fall was ready to be sprung at a touch.

"All right; here you are!" he said, lowering his left hand, and thrusting it into his jacket pocket, he produced the required article. "Shall I put 'em on myself, or will you come and attend to that?"

"Put 'em on," said the captain. "I'll undertake to see that they are secure after that."

"All right."

There was a click, and Deadwood Dick stood handcuffed.

If only that car had contained half a dozen such men as he often had around him as allies!

As it was there was not a saving hand—not a single spirit brave enough to attempt his defense; and it was just as well, for had there been one such, he would have been unsupported; it would have been a needless sacrifice of a brave man.

"Now, then, come this way!" Captain Joaquin ordered. "Have you got any baggage aboard?"

"Not an ounce."

"All the better."

Dick advanced, as ordered, and way was made for him to pass out, the out-

laws still covering the passengers with their guns.

One of their number laid a hand on Dick as he passed, and went with him, while the others backed away from the door, their revolvers still to the front, and sprang to the ground.

Captain Joaquin sounded a whistle.

His men backed away from the train with him, their Winchesters and revolvers ready for instant service.

When they had withdrawn to the distance of several yards, the captain shouted to the engineer to go ahead, but the conductor swung his arm and countermanded the order.

He and the trainmen had been held up in a group by themselves while the robbers were doing their work.

"What's the matter with you?" cried the Red Rover.

That, by the way, was a name by which the outlaw was fully as well known as by his appellation of Captain Joaquin.

"That express-car is the matter," was the answer. "You can't expect me to risk the lives of my passengers by starting before I see whether it is fit to run or not."

"It will hang together until you get to the next station, if you are careful, and that is all you want. Go ahead!" to the engineer. "If you don't, we will riddle you with bullets and start your train ourselves and run you straight to Satan!"

That settled it. The moment they turned their guns upon the engineer he blew the signal to go ahead, and pulled the throttle.

Finding that the express-car was on its trucks all right, and that it would run, he pulled the throttle again, and there was nothing for the conductor and trainmen to do but jump aboard.

The band of outlaws gave them a parting cheer, swinging their hats until the train rounded the next bend and passed out of sight.

The dead, we have forgotten to mention, had been thrown into the express-car.

The wounded outlaws were hurriedly cared for while the horses were brought.

Scarce ten minutes had been occupied, all together, and in two or three minutes after the departure of the train the robbers were wending their way into the mountains.

It had been one of Captain Joaquin's most daring raids, and at the same time one of his most successful; certainly it had brought him more than he had counted upon.

And, besides, Deadwood Dick—whom he had feared if he feared any man—was his prisoner!

That was, after all, his biggest haul, and he breathed easier.

He had known for some time, or had, with good reason, believed that the prince of detectives was on his trail, and his vigilance thus had been severely taxed. Now he had this terrible outlaw and crook-hunter corralled; that was glory enough for one year!

"Well, Deadwood Dick, I have got you at last," he remarked, as they rode along.

"Yes, so it appears. You have been looking for me, then?"

"Well, we have been looking for you, yes."

"And what do you intend to do with me, now that you have got me? On your word that you would give me a fair show, I placed these handcuffs on my wrists, as you see."

"Yes, and I have not tried them yet, as I promised to do, by the way. Here,

Jim, just see if this fellow's irons are safe."

One of the men rode forward and tried them.

"He can't git out of them 'ar things, cap'n," he reported.

"All right. It seems you put them on to stay, Deadwood Dick. You have the key to them, of course."

"In my vest pocket."

"All right. Just relieve him of it, Jim."

"You bet, boss! We don't want him springin' no tricks on us, hey?"

The outlaw thrust his fingers into Dick's pocket and brought forth a small key, handing it to Captain Joaquin.

"Not much of a trick I could spring on you, my good fellow," observed Dick. "If you tried it, you would find that you could not unlock the bracelets to save your life, even with the key in your fingers."

"Ther doose I couldn't!"

"Not if they were on your own wrists, no."

"All the same, I will retain the key," assured the Red Rover.

"And what kind of a fair show do you intend to give me?" again demanded the prisoner.

"What kind of a show do you want?"

"Just a chance for my life, that is all."

"You picked off two or three of our men, though," one complained.

"And you killed about as many of ours, so that account ought to stand squared," argued Bristol.

"Well, call it square," rejoined Captain Joaquin. "I said I would give you a show, and I will. How would you like to become one of us?"

CHAPTER IV.

REJECTING A PROPOSAL.

Dick Bristol smiled grimly.

He knew that Captain Joaquin was no fool, and also that the outlaw did not take him to be one.

Was this the chance for his life the road-raider intended to give him? It looked so; Dick could plainly see the string attached to the gift.

He did not respond immediately.

"You don't answer," urged the Red Rover.

"What is the use? Were I to accept, all in good faith, you would not trust me."

"Why not?"

"Because I am Deadwood Dick, the Dead-Set Detective and Rogue-Runner." Captain Joaquin smiled in his turn.

He and his men had now removed their masks.

"That is a good enough reason, certainly," he said.

"And that is the only show you intend to give me?"

"What else can I do? I will give you an equal share with the rest of my men of the plunder we have taken to-day, according to the rate I divide with them, and make you one of us. I can't do any more than that."

"There is no use our trying to fool each other, Captain Joaquin."

"Then you don't believe that I will do what I say?"

"Yes, I believe you will do that, if I say I will accept the proposition."

"Then what is the matter with your accepting it? You would make a fine lieutenant for me, now that poor Hoxey is dead—thanks to that express-messenger."

"I had rather deal openly with you than underhanded, Red Rover," was Dick's response.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what you know—that I am first, last and all the time against birds of your feather, and that were I to accept your offer it would be only to do you a trick at the first opportunity."

A murmur of admiration ran through the company of cut-throats.

"That being the case, I must recall the offer, that's all. I have no way of convincing you that I meant it in good faith."

"No, you would find it impossible to do that."

"Well, I have given you the show I promised."

"And it was about what I expected, at your hands. You have got me; you mean to do away with me. Well, I do not blame you for that."

"Thunder! but you are a brave cuss, Dick Bristol! What a team you and I would make, if we could only have confidence in each other and work together! But, that is out of the question."

"Entirely out of the question."

"Then, what can you propose?"

"Let me go, and I pledge you my word not to move against you for a period of ten days, you to observe the same armistice."

"And after that?"

"War to the knife again!"

"I hope you do not take me for a fool."

"Not at all, save only that all villains are fools in that they go wrong instead of right."

"Have a care, Bristol! Some word of yours may cost your life without a moment's notice. I am not the man to brook many such insults, I give you warning."

"Neither are you a coward, Red Rover. You would not shoot me down handcuffed as I am."

Again a murmur ran through the band.

"You have nothing more to propose?"

"No; I considered that proposition a sort of even exchange; that was all."

"An exchange? Where does the exchange come in, I would like to know? I do not see that I would be getting anything out of it."

"It would be giving me my life for yours. I could have picked you off easily when you entered that car after me, but spared you."

"Ha! ha! Lucky for you you didn't do that; you would have been a dead man the same instant."

"And you would have been just as dead, for I seldom miss my mark when I take a bead on a man."

"Then why didn't you shoot me? Come, now, why didn't you?"

"Because I knew it would cost the lives of the others in the car, who hadn't the nerve to follow where I led, on the first occasion. It would have been much easier to have shot you than it was to take those two fellows who already had the drop on the car."

"Well, that cuts no ice with me, since you didn't spare me for any love you have for me. There is really no reason why I should spare you, that I can see."

"Nor I."

"Then what are you kicking about?"

"All I am asking is a fair chance. When I put on these handcuffs I had your word that I would get that."

"And I have given it, and you have refused it. I can do nothing more than that. It has been war to the knife between us, as you expressed it, and I have won the fight. I would be a fool to give up the advantage gained."

"Just as you have a mind to look at it."

"Suppose you had captured me, would you let me go again?"

"No, sir!"

"Then say no more about it. Neither can I let you go. I would be a fool if I did."

"Well, I have to agree with you, Captain Joaquin. As I said before, there is no use in our trying to fool each other. We are foes to the bitter end, and so be it."

The outlaw gave a nod and a wave of the hand in acquiescence, and which, at the same time, cut the subject short.

A little later he called a halt.

"Here, men," he said, "is the place for us to part company. You know what the programme is."

They answered that they did.

"You, Hurley, I will make my lieutenant in place of Hoxey. Take the men on at speed to Injun Ford, and there divide your force, half going up the creek and half down. Part by twos, and scatter to every point of the compass until the time of meeting, as agreed."

"All right; we understand," answered Hurley.

Captain Joaquin dismounted.

"But, what about the prisoner?" his lieutenant inquired. "What are we going to do with him?"

"Hang me if I know," responded the Red Rover, rubbing his chin in a meditative manner.

"Just whatever you say, captain," assured Hurley.

"I am afraid to trust him with you, boys," decided Captain Joaquin, after a few moments' reflection. "He would be sure to find the soft spot in your hearts, if you have got such organs, and play upon it. I guess I will take him with me. Dismount, Deadwood Dick!"

"And be murdered in cold blood somewhere in the mountain passes?"

"You will be shot here and now if you don't."

"Well, it is about as broad as it is long," observed Dick, throwing his leg over and leaping lightly to the ground. "You hold the winning card, captain."

"Yes, and I intend to play it for all there is in it, too," was the rejoinder. "Come, boys, off with you, and make all the time you can, for the sheriff and his posse will be on your trail in less than two hours."

"And let him catch us if he can!" cried Hurley, as he touched his horse and led the way, the riderless horses being led.

The others cheered as they followed, and as soon as they had passed out of sight, Captain Joaquin turned to Dick and said:

"Now, then, Deadwood Dick, you follow me."

CHAPTER V.

TURNING THE TABLES.

Captain Joaquin met with the surprise of his life, just there!

Deadwood Dick's hands came up to the level, the handcuffs swinging by one wrist, and in each hand a gun!

"I prefer to have you follow me, Red Rover!" Dick said grimly. "If you make a move or a sound you are a dead man in the same instant, I give you fair warning."

The outlaw turned as white as chalk. "Curse you!" he hissed. "You have tricked me, after all!"

"Everything is fair in love and war," with a smile. "You are my prisoner."

"Cursed idiot that I was for not hanging you to the first tree we came to! But, do you not mean to give me a show?"

"About as much of a show as you gave me, perhaps."

"You have got me; I own the corn. But let us come to some sort of terms. I have got about seventy thousand dollars here in this bag; I'll divide even with you and each go his way."

"What is the use of dividing, when I can have it all if I want to take it?"

"Do not be too sure of that—"

"Hold! I read your thought in your eyes, my man. If you make a move to get a gun you will die before you can say scat! Dick Bristol seldom misses his mark."

"Curse you! But before you shall have this wealth you shall murder me to get it; I will defend it with my life."

"I do not want it; that is, I want you and it together."

"Then you mean—"

"To hand you over to the authorities, yes, and restore the funds to their owner."

"You are a fool! Here is a life-time fortune within reach of your hand, Deadwood Dick, and if you do as you say you will not get more than five thousand, at the most, for your risk and trouble."

"That is your way of looking at it."

"My way of looking at it, yes."

"And you will not accept my proposition?"

"Decidedly not."

"Then I have another to make."

"What is it?"

"First let us draw back from this trail. I took leave of my men here in order to get away safely with the boodle—"

"Which I do not mean that you shall do, so I prefer to remain close to the trail. The sheriff's posse will pass this way as soon as a special engine can be run to the scene of your robbery."

"And you will turn me over to them?"

"Exactly."

"I will not be alive."

"That will be your fault, then. You will be worth just as much to them."

"Well, for my proposition—are you open to anything that I might suggest? I made you a fair offer, when I held the better hand."

"An offer that you did not mean, however."

"I swear that I did mean it."

"I have only your word for that."

"And my word is all I have to give you."

"You mean to tell me that you, knowing who I am, really would have entered into a compact with me and taken me into your band?"

"That is just what I do tell you—just what I did mean. You would not have it so, and there was an end of it. I gave you a fair show, the same as I said I would."

"And now?"

"I want a fair show in return."

"Well, I'll give it to you, as far as I can. What is your suggestion?"

"Give me yours first. Perhaps it is something that we can agree upon, and, if so, no need to mention mine."

"Well, you undertake to aid me in taking this money safe to its destination, and I will use my influence with the governor for a pardon for you and make you my detective ally."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"You will not listen to it, eh! Well, it is all I can offer you, and is on a par with the offer you made me."

"It is impossible, just as impossible as the offer I made you—yes, a good deal more so. The governor has a rope ready for me, and he will use it at the first opportunity."

"Well, what is your proposition, then?"

"That we decide this matter by a fair and square duel to the death."

"Which is a rather cool thing to ask of an officer of the law, after he has bagged his game."

"Then you will not do it?"

"Why should I?"

"Because I was in earnest in the offer I made you when you were my prisoner."

"Captain Joaquin, I don't believe it. You are not such a fool as to make such a proposition to me in earnest, knowing who I am. Or, if you did mean it, there was a purpose behind it."

"My purpose was to make you my friend instead of my foe."

"I believe that you lie—"

"Then I cannot convince you, that is certain. What are you going to do with me?"

"I say I believe that you lie, but giving you the benefit of the doubt, and giving you half a chance for your life, I will accept your proposition."

"You will take half and let me go—"

"No, no, not that; I will fight you to the death, the best man to win. We'll see whether chance will be on the side of the law or the lawless."

"You don't mean it!"

"You are surprised?"

"Yes."

"You take me for a fool, I know, and so I am for giving you such a chance; but there is the bare possibility that you are telling the truth concerning the chance you would have given me."

"Yes, yes, I swear that I was telling the truth—that I did—that I am telling the truth!"

"Very well, I give you the benefit of the doubt."

Deadwood Dick believed that the fellow was lying, nevertheless, and so, in fact, he was. Seeing a chance to gain the point, he played upon the string to the limit.

"I don't believe you, but I will do as I say," said Dick. "Put down that bag of money, and go away twenty paces and draw your guns."

"Ha! there is something else to be thought of."

"What is that? Don't forget, meantime, that I hold the drop, and that the slightest suspicious move on your part will mean your death, which will naturally culminate all negotiations."

"I am not rash enough to try any trick with you, Deadwood Dick. I am too eager to accept the one chance in a thousand that you hold out to me. What I was going to say—suppose we both get disabled, what of the money in that event? Some one who has no right to it will come along and gather it in."

"What do you propose respecting it, then?"

"That we go and cache it first of all."

"Very well, that is not a bad idea. It will be safe for you or for me, whichever has use for it after our duel."

"Just so. I know a fine place for it, where it will keep for ten days or ten years, just as the case may be, and where no one will ever find it in the world."

"There is one objection to that, however."

"And that is?"

"That we may both be killed outright, and the money will never be recovered."

"We'll have to take the chances of that. Come, we must do something, for we are wasting precious time—at any rate, I am. Every minute I stay here I am one minute nearer prison doors."

CHAPTER VI.

CACHING THE TREASURE.

Deadwood Dick had to laugh.

There was something about the situation that struck him as being ridiculous.

Why should he be talking terms and conditions to a man already in his power, and that man an outlaw? It was needless, and yet— Well, Deadwood Dick had his moods.

He was willing to give the fellow, rascal though he was, the benefit of a doubt, and now that his word had been given he would not recall it. That was not Deadwood Dick's way. What he said, that had to stand; and yet, as said, he had to laugh.

"As if you are not as good as in prison already," he said. "Still, I have given my word, and I'll stick to it. Pace off the required number of steps backward, then draw your guns, and at the word from me open fire, and do your best to dispose of me. If you miss the first shot I warn you that you are not likely to get a second."

"But, the money?"

"Take it with you; I can pick it up after I have dropped you. If I happen to be the one to go down, you will not have to stop."

"No, no, we must not risk that, Deadwood Dick. Recall what I said a moment ago. If you are going to give me a show at all, let it be a fair one all around."

"Then you are determined to cache it?"

"I want to."

"That will mean a delay while you draw two maps of the spot where it is cached, one for me and the other for you. If we both go down, others can then find and profit by it."

"Yes, I'll do that. I can't expect to have it all my own way."

"All right. First of all, turn your back to me and remove your weapons, and lay them on the ground."

"What for?"

"Because I will not risk a snap shot from you when you might possibly get a chance to fire it."

"Well, I can't kick. You are the fiddler, just now, and I have got to dance to your tune. If the tables turn again, however, you will dance to mine, I warn you."

"Should the tables turn, you will have a chance to deal as honorably with me as I have done with you."

"And I'll do it, too."

The outlaw turned the other way, Dick's precaution against a snap shot, while he was removing his weapons, and in a moment was disarmed. His rifle, a brace of revolvers, and a knife lay on the ground.

"These things are not to be left here," he said.

"Certainly not," answered Dick; "I will bring them along with me. Go ahead, now, to the place where you want to hide the money."

"All right, follow me. I will take you to a place that is known only to myself." He started off.

Dick, having gathered up the weapons, followed.

He held his man under cover, and it would have been impossible for him to escape.

Straight up into the mountain fastness, for a mile, the outlaw led the way, and they left no trail that could possibly have been followed save possibly by a bloodhound.

If it has seemed that Deadwood Dick was acting unwisely, and was assuming too great risks, it was not altogether

without some compensating objects in view. He wanted to learn some of the secrets of this Red Rover who had become a terror in the State.

Finally, on a plateau on the very summit of a low peak, Captain Joaquin stopped.

"Here we are," he said.

It was a scene of wildest grandeur.

On every hand higher peaks rose and overshadowed the one on which they stood.

There was but one approach to the plateau, the way they had come. Every other side presented a sheer descent that could not be scaled.

Just back from the place where they had stepped up onto the rock table was a depression in which lay a boulder that was seemingly loose and possibly movable.

"And your cache is under that boulder?" asked Dick.

"Yes, there. You were quick to guess it— But, then, there is no other place possible."

"Hence it was not a guess, but a conclusion. Well, deposit your plunder and let us settle our business."

"Yes, in short order."

The outlaw chieftain put his shoulder to the boulder, at a certain point, and began surging his weight against it, and presently it moved.

He increased the force, it moved more and a little more, till presently it rolled over to another point of support, revealing a hole in the table under where it had rested.

"Here we are," he said.

"Any treasure there now?" asked Dick.

"No, not a bit; look and see for yourself."

"It does not matter."

"All right."

Captain Joaquin took the bag from his shoulder and tossed it into the cavity, strap and all, and going around to the other side of the boulder, turned it back into place.

"Now for the key-maps to the hiding-place," said Dick.

"That is going to a good deal of trouble."

"All on your account."

The outlaw smiled, and took paper and pencil from his pocket.

Spreading the paper upon the side of the boulder where a flat surface was presented, he began to sketch a map.

It took him several minutes, and when it was done he proceeded to make a duplicate of it. Both done, he held them up for Deadwood Dick's inspection.

"There you are," he said. "You can see for yourself that I have made them correct. Here is the main trail, this is the way we came, and here is the little peak on which we are standing. Here I have made an index, and under it written—Turn the boulder."

"That is good enough," said Dick, "but just write—Here treasure is hidden."

"All right, as you desire."

The words were written, and one of the maps was handed to Dick.

Dick put it into his pocket, Captain Joaquin doing the same with his copy, and they were ready.

"Now for business," said the Red Rover.

"Yes, now to oblige you," said Dick.

"Where is the fight to take place?"

"Just down there where the straight stretch of gulch lies, where we can have a clear and fair range, with nothing in the way."

"I prefer to go out to the gulch from which this one branches," said Dick. "I take it that one is traveled, while this one is seldom entered save by you yourself."

"What's your reason for that?"

"We want our bodies to be found, if we both get hit hard."

"Well, I won't quarrel with your plan. Come on and let's have it over and done with."

Captain Joaquin led the way down from the little peak, Dick following close behind him, and through the first gulch mentioned out to the one Dick had preferred.

"This will do," said Dick. "I do not want to have too far to walk back to get the treasure. Here are your weapons," laying them on the ground as he spoke; "take them and back off the required distance, and we will begin to perforate each other. The man who strikes the ticker first, wins. Remember what I told you about the first shot."

"I'll try to make it unnecessary to fire more than one," said the outlaw, with a sardonic smile, as he picked up his weapons.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET SHOT.

Deadwood Dick smiled too, in a grim fashion.

While fate might be against him, yet it was his intention to shoot Captain Joaquin so dead that he would never kick again.

"It was a trying moment for both men."

With Dick it was like bantering Providence, while with the Red Rover it was a last desperate chance, like one in a thousand. With both it was a moment to test their nerves.

That neither was a coward needs no attesting.

Captain Joaquin measured off twenty paces, walking with his back to Dick and trusting him fully.

Perhaps he felt that he could trust to the honor of a man who would thus give him a chance for his life after having caught him and made him prisoner.

Not only was Dick doing that, but he was running the risk of his own life by so doing. He was making it an even toss between right and wrong, between law and outlaw, between justice and iniquity.

Captain Joaquin stopped and faced around.

"Are you ready?" he coolly asked.

"One moment," said Dick.

"What is it?"

"I do not want to take any advantage of you, nor do I mean to allow you to take any advantage of me if I can help it."

"That is right."

"We must have a signal to fire by, and it must be one that neither of us can mistake."

"I agree with you there. What shall it be?"

"If we had some one here to count three for us, that would do, but seeing that we have not, we cannot do it for ourselves."

"Why not?"

"The one who counted would have just the shade of an advantage over the other."

"He should not take it."

"If he hesitated, the other fellow would have it."

"I don't understand."

"If I count, I can say three and shoot at the same moment, while it would take a fraction of a second for you to hear and shoot."

"There's something in that, I guess."
 "Now, what I propose is this: We will count up to ten, in unison, keeping perfect time; hands straight down at the sides, and at the word ten we will fire."

"I can't find any fault with that."
 "It is as fair as we can make it. Are your weapons in order?"

"Yes; and yours?"
 "The same. Place yourself in position."

The outlaw had laid his Winchester on the ground, and with a revolver in each hand, he stood erect, hands at his sides.

Deadwood Dick was already in that position, for the agreement had so far progressed that it seemed useless for him to hold the Red Rover under cover when the end was so near.

"Now," said Dick, "count with me, and by the time we reach six or seven it will sound as one voice. Remember, neither is to lift an arm until ten is heard; then you may shoot just as quick as you can. Are you all ready to begin? I don't want to hurry you."

"I am all ready; let her go."
 "All right, begin: One, two, three, four," they started, and by the time four was spoken they were in time and unison, and it sounded as Dick had said, as one voice. "Five, six, seven—"

Crack!
 The report of a rifle rang out upon the still air.

Deadwood Dick gave a start, partly raised his right hand, and fell forward on his face.

Captain Joaquin looked around in greatest surprise, and hesitated only a moment before he sprang to the cover of a huge boulder that lay near at hand.

Evidently he did not want a dose of the same medicine.

A laugh rang out, the laugh of a woman, and a young woman made her appearance from the point where the rifle had been fired.

She was fair-looking, clad in a bright jacket, short skirt and a sombrero, her feet incased in stout shoes and leggings. She had a rifle in her hands.

At sight of her Captain Joaquin leaped from cover.

"Susana!"
 "As you see, my love!"
 "But what have you done? Why did you do this?"

"Why did I do it? Why, but to save the life of him I love!"

"But, it was a fair fight; I had no right to any advantage; he was giving me a chance for my life."

"And your Susana gave you a better chance; ha, ha, ha! But, who was he? Some hateful sheriff, I suppose, who would not let you mind your own business your own way."

"No, it was Deadwood Dick, Junior."

"Heavens!"
 The young woman started and paled.
 "Did you not suspect that it was he, Susana?"

"Not for a moment. Had I, I would have missed him with nervousness, sure."

"Well, the deed is done, and we will not cry over it now. A kiss, my pet, and then I will show you treasure that will make your eyes sparkle."

The young woman dropped the rifle and threw herself into the man's embrace, and their lips met. He caressed her for a moment, then let her go and she recovered her weapon.

"So, you would not take the chances, eh?" said Captain Joaquin.

"How could I, seeing how cool and determined he looked, and imagining you falling forward with a bullet in your heart—Heavens, no!"

"And yet it was a square deal, the squarest I ever got in my life, Susana. If he had killed me, it would have been a fair game, and I could not have made a kick when I found myself suddenly transported."

The young woman laughed.
 "You are not dying yet, though, if I can prevent," she said. "Come, we must see about that treasure."

"We must first see if you killed your man."

"Killed him? He is so dead he will never move again in this world, Joaquin."

"And he can well be spared, for he has been a terror to gentlemen of my calling all his life. Your name will be exalted, my pet. There will be a big price on your head."

"And my Joaquin will defend me."
 "To the last drop of blood, you are right."

They were walking to where Deadwood Dick lay while talking thus.

As they came near they heard a slight groan, and the young woman gave a start and turned pale.

"Your shot was not so fatal, after all," said the Red Rover.

"He must be dying," said the young woman. "I aimed carefully at his head."

"And succeeded finely in stunning him. See there, you made a neat little crease just over the temple. You will have to finish the job."

"Heavens, no!"
 "Why not?"

"I could not do it now, since you are out of danger; besides, he is down and cannot help himself."

Captain Joaquin drew a pistol and cocked it.

"No, no!" cried the woman, catching his arm. "You must not, you must not!"

"It must be his life or mine," said the Red Rover, grimly. "Better now, while he is unconscious. Out of the way a moment, Susana."

"No, no! You must not—you shall not! Did you not tell me that it was a fair fight, that he was giving you the fairest show you ever had in your life? For shame!"

Captain Joaquin flushed, and thrust his revolver back into its holster spitefully. He recalled the chance that Deadwood Dick had given him for his life, and was for the moment abashed, under the scornful gaze of this woman who loved him.

The next moment Deadwood Dick opened his eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN JOAQUIN'S RETREAT.

Dick was dazed.
 It was a moment before he could recall what had passed.

When he did so, he realized that the situation had greatly changed, and could not tell whether minutes or hours had passed.

But his mind quickly cleared, as a magic drop will clear a glass of clouded water, and he took in the situation and the new-comer upon the ground, and guessed the rest.

He remembered that he and his foe had not counted up to the number that was to have been the signal for them to fire, and hence some one else had taken a hand in the game. That Captain Joaquin had not fired the treacherous shot he was well aware.

The Red Rover stood motionless the last Dick remembered of him.

All this passed through Dick's mind in the few brief seconds before he spoke.

"So, you are alive, are you?" said Captain Joaquin. "It was a close call for you, Deadwood Dick."

"Who shot me?" asked Dick, feeling of his hurt.

"No matter who," was the reply. "It was not I, nor was it done by any order or consent of mine. I had no thought or intention of giving you anything but a fair fight."

"I am willing to believe that. It must have been some friend of yours, some one who feared for your life. Well, such is the fortune of war, and it appears that the tables have been turned. You now hold the joker, and I am in your power."

"There is no denying that."

"And what am I to expect?"

"You will have to dance to my tune, now, seeing that the tables have turned, as you say, and I am now the fiddler. I gave you warning of that."

"And I remember that I reminded you that should this thing occur, you would be honor bound to deal as honorably with me as I dealt with you, which you promised you would do."

"And he will keep his promise, sir," spoke up the young woman.

She looked at Captain Joaquin.

"Yes, of course," Captain Joaquin snarled. "At the same time, you must admit that self-preservation is the first law of nature. I must treat you as I would a rattlesnake, which, if I let it go, would turn and bite me."

"Is your former proposition still open?" asked Dick.

"What was that?"

"To join you."

"No, that is closed."

Dick smiled.

"I was not wrong, then, in my estimate of your earnestness when you made it, even if I did give you the benefit of the doubt," he said.

"That is a past question," said the Red Rover. "You have since assured me that nothing could tempt you to join me, but on the other hand that you intend to crush me."

"Let it pass," Dick waived.

Feeling by this time able to do so, he got upon his feet, but he had to lean against a boulder for support.

His head ached and was dizzy, and the shot had given him an indescribable numb feeling throughout his entire body. It had been about as close a call as he had ever experienced.

"You are now my prisoner," said the outlaw. "Susana, you secure his weapons—there they lie on the ground—and I will handcuff him again. I will put on that other pair, I think, seeing that you had the choice of selection before," to Dick.

"You have it all your own way, just now," said Dick. "I am not in it, so to say."

"You are right in it," the outlaw disputed.

"Well, no matter. If you are going to handcuff me, though, I hope you will dress the wound I have received."

The young woman opened her lips to say something, but withheld her words and looked to Captain Joaquin for the response. Dick believed that he had a friend in her.

His first thought had been that it was she who had fired at him. He was now in doubt on that point.

"Yes, we'll tie it up," the outlaw snapped.

Revolver in hand, he stepped forward and felt in Dick's jacket pocket for the remaining pair of handcuffs.

They were there ready to his hand, and he brought them forth and snapped

them upon Dick's wrists. Resistance would have been useless, so Dick submitted.

"You have got me safe enough this time," Dick observed.

"Yes, I guess I have," was the response. "And I intend to keep you so, too."

"I do not blame you; I give you fair warning that if I escape it will be to open the warfare without quarter given or asked."

"I am well aware of that."

"Dealing more than fairly with you before, I am fair with you still, even with the tide against me, so you may know what to expect."

"You are a brave man, Deadwood Dick, no gainsaying that. What you have just said would be sufficient warrant for me to put you to the death at once, for my own protection."

"You have it in your power to do that, but you are honor bound to give me a chance for my life."

"Shall we carry out our duel?"

"I am not your match in condition, after this wound."

"Well, you may be in a day or two. Tie up his head for him, Susana, and we'll go home."

The young woman tore a handkerchief and made a temporary bandage, which she wound around Dick's head, covering the wound, and secured with pins.

"There, that will do until we get to the cabin," she said. "When we get there I will tie it up better and make it more comfortable for you. While we are foes, yet I can do that for you in mercy."

"You have not told me who shot me," said Dick.

The young woman flushed.

"Nor do we intend to," said Captain Joaquin. "Be satisfied that you are alive, and ask no questions."

"I am satisfied that my first guess was correct," said Dick. "What that guess was, you no doubt rightly conjecture, so we will say no more about it. I am, as you said, glad I'm alive."

"Shall we go to the house?" asked the young woman.

"I suppose we'll have to, with this prisoner on our hands, though I ought to return and look after that boodle—"

"Ah! I had forgotten that."

"Still, it is safely cached, and is safer, perhaps, than it would be at the cabin. Come, we'll go to the cabin."

"No one saw you cache it?" asked Susana.

"No one but this fellow."

"And you have got him secure enough. Better leave it where it is."

Captain Joaquin still had his revolver in hand, and having slung his rifle across his back he ordered Deadwood Dick to precede him along the gulch bottom.

Half an hour's walk and several turnings brought them at last into a glade where a cabin stood under the shade of some trees.

It was like an oasis in the rocky wilds.

A fertile little pocket in the midst of wildest surroundings, it was an ideal spot for such a retreat as Captain Joaquin required when too hotly pressed by the officers of the law.

Deadwood Dick had at last the secret of his rendezvous.

But at what a cost? He fully believed that it was the intention of the Red Rover that he should never leave the place alive.

At the same time Dick was determined that he would make his escape if given half an opportunity, and that he would eventually bring the infamous outlaw to justice.

The young woman opened the door of the cabin, and the outlaw ordered Dick to enter, which he did. He had no choice but to obey, for the present, though he had yet another card in reserve for future use as soon as the time was ripe for it.

Just what that card was will presently be shown.

CHAPTER IX.

A CHANCE FOR HIS LIFE.

The interior of the cabin was home-like.

It showed evidences of a woman's care, and it was a most inviting retreat.

Having several apartments, it was more than a cabin in the generally accepted sense of the word, yet in outward appearance it was a cabin nevertheless, being of logs.

Well furnished, it displayed an abundance of fancy articles that spoke mutely of raids on the road and in towns to the north and south. There were books, pictures, and musical instruments, proof that this notorious road-agent had refinement of taste.

"Now, what are we going to do with him?" demanded Captain Joaquin.

"I'll try to make myself as little trouble to you as possible," said Dick.

"Put me anywhere that is convenient."

"How will this room do?" asked the young woman, opening a door near at hand.

"Anywhere," said Dick.

"I was not speaking to you, sir," she snapped.

"Your pardon," said Dick, promptly.

"I suppose that will answer," growled the Red Rover. "He cannot possibly get out of there handcuffed, that is certain. In with you."

"Pray put yourselves to as little trouble as possible on my account," Dick politely requested as he stepped into the room. "When you are at leisure, Captain Joaquin, let me have an interview."

"To what purpose?" was demanded.

"You will, in justice, give me a chance for my life, of course."

"We will talk about that when I get ready," was the snarl. "For the present you remain here."

He closed the door with that, and Dick heard him secure it on the other side. The prince of detectives knew that he could look for little mercy at the hands of the Red Rover.

The room into which Dick had been thrust was light. There was one window, rather small and through which it would be impossible for the prisoner to climb with his hands secured as they were. It gave him a view of the side of the pocket opposite to the entrance.

There was a bed, a couple of chairs, and a stand, in the way of furniture.

Dick threw himself on the bed, for his head was beating and throbbing as if ready to split, and his wound was very painful, though slight.

He could hear Captain Joaquin and the woman talking in the main room of the cabin, but could not make out what they were saying. He heard also other voices from another direction.

These were the voices of two servants, a negress and a Mexican half-breed woman.

After a time the door opened and the negress came in.

She was rather old.

"Whur 'm-dat dar so' head ob you's?" she demanded in thick fashion. "I's gwine to dress hit fo' yo'."

"I guess you will find it on my shoulders yet, auntie," said Dick. "It was

there the last I knew anything about it, anyhow. I hope you can ease the pain."

"Golly! I reckon I kin do dat dar, child. Yo' roll ober heah and let old Sal git a squint at it, and see ef I don't make it feel better. Golly! you did git a nasty one, shua 'nuff. One hair mō' to de norf-east, and yo' was a goner, shua!"

Dick had to smile at her quaint expressions. He had been in a light sleep, and felt better.

She had removed the bandage the young woman had put on.

Having brought with her a basin of water, she bathed the wound, and that done, dressed it afresh with some kind of pounded leaves.

"Have you any idea what is going to be done with me?" Dick inquired, while she was at work.

"Not a bit ob one, sah," she answered.

"How many are there in the house?" he asked.

"Only de captain and de missus, and us two old wimmin and yo'se'f."

"And when does the captain expect the others to come in? His men come here, I suppose."

"Some ob 'em does, but not many. Some be heah to-night, I 'pine."

"And some others will never come," said Dick.

"Dar, dar yo' am," the old negress said with something of pride in her tone. "Yo' jis' leab dat on dar an hour, and yo' won't know yo'se'f, shua. No pain kin stay whur dat am."

"I hope you are right, auntie. The kindest old lady I ever knew looked just like you. I hope you are right, and that you won't forget that I am here when the grub is passed around. I am a trifle hungry, and a drink of cold water would go particularly good just now."

"Yo' shall hab it, child, yo' jis' bet!"

She gathered up her basin and things and waddled out, for she was very fat, and in a few minutes returned with a pitcher of sparkling water.

A draught of that made Dick feel better immediately, and he thanked the woman in a way calculated to create a friendly feeling toward himself. He might need her service in some other direction.

In a little while Captain Joaquin entered.

Dick was feeling much better, and was sitting up when the outlaw made his appearance.

"Well, I have come to have that talk with you," he announced.

"Glad of it," said Dick, "I am lonesome."

"I have thought of a plan, and I am going to give you a chance for your life about as good as you gave me."

"Ah! that so?"

"You will admit that the chance you gave me was not a great big one, I suppose."

"It was just an even thing whether you killed me or I killed you, Captain Joaquin. I am willing to take the same chance again."

"But I am not. You have the reputation of being a dead-shot, Deadwood Dick, and you certainly felt confident of making cold meat of me when you offered me that generous chance for my life."

"I certainly meant to, unless you performed that office for me," was the cool admission.

"Well, I will give you just the same kind of a show."

"You will fight?"

"I said I would not. No, but I will give you an even chance for your life, as promised."

"Well, I accept it. What is it?"

"No matter whether you accept it or not, it is yours. Some of my men will be here during the night, and when they arrive I will carry out the plan."

"You do not mean to let me know what it is?"

"If it will do you any good, I will tell you."

"I am somewhat personally interested."

The outlaw laughed harshly.

"Yes, I guess you are, too," he said.

"Well, it will be an even chance for your life, I promise you that," he added.

"An equal number of white and of black beans will be put into a bag, and you will be required to draw one out. If it be white, you live; black, and you die at midnight."

Dick smiled grimly.

"Suppose I should draw a white one, does that give me my liberty?" he asked.

"Not at once. You will be taken away from here blindfolded, and detained ten days, at the end of which time you will be set free. Meantime, I will have pulled up stakes here and given you the slip."

"And you will give me no other chance whatever?"

"No, sir."

"All right, I'll have to take what is offered, of course, and be glad to get it, I suppose."

"You may be thankful for it, for, if you should draw the white, as you say, it will mean a deuce of a lot of trouble for me, and all because I feel bound to give you this chance."

"You are in honor bound to do that, no matter how small the chance may be, after the way I risked my life against yours, giving you the benefit of a doubt where I did not believe that a doubt existed at all. I'll expect you, then, when your men arrive."

"As soon as they get here; I will not keep you waiting."

CHAPTER X.

DICK IN A DEATH-TRAP.

Deadwood Dick was again left alone.

A grim smile came over his face as he looked at the door that had just closed.

"It is a bitter pill for him to swallow, this giving me a chance for my life," he said to himself, "and I'll bet ten to one that I don't get it on the square."

The chances were that he would not.

"I was a fool, perhaps, to take the risk I did with the fellow, when the law was all on my side, but I took him so utterly by surprise that it did not seem exactly fair. The trouble is, my heart is entirely too big and too soft for the profession I am following."

It was not that; the trouble was, he was too honorable with the desperate characters with whom he had to deal.

But, that was Deadwood Dick's way.

The day waned and night came on at last. Dick had been well fed, by the old negress, and he felt grateful toward her.

He had seen nothing more of the young woman, but had heard her singing at different times during the afternoon. He had no reason to look for any assistance from her.

In the evening she and Captain Joaquin sang together in the main room, and it was singing well worthy attention.

It caused Dick to sigh for a life so misspent.

Finally, after some time, the door of the room Dick was in opened, and a flood of light streamed in.

Captain Joaquin entered, and Susana came as far as the doorway, where she stood framed in the light, clad in a gown that made her appear beautiful in the soft radiance.

"I suppose you are still here, eh?" said the outlaw.

He could not see at once, coming out of the lighted room.

"You might be sure of that," said Dick. "I would remain, even were I free, to listen to your singing."

"I have not come in for flattery nor praise, but to make sure that you are secure. Let me feel of those handcuffs before I retire for the night. My men may not be here till morning."

"Here they are; feel to your satisfaction."

He did so.

"No getting out of them," he said.

"You are as safely my prisoner as I was yours once to-day, if not more so, Deadwood Dick."

"You need not remind me of it," said Dick.

"Well, good-night. If the men come, I will call you up, for some deeds are more agreeable in the dark than in the daylight."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"I mean, if you should have the ill luck to draw a black."

"I understand you, I guess, captain. You will find me here when you want me. I may be a little hard to awaken, but shake me hard and you will bring me out of it."

"You will be awakened, never fear."

The outlaw withdrew and closed and secured the door, and after a time the cabin was dark and silent.

A little longer, and Deadwood Dick rose silently to his feet.

Lifting his wrists to his face, he was occupied for some moments at something, and presently there was a faint click.

He removed the handcuffs from his wrists and put them into his jacket pocket, and took a key from his mouth, where it had long been concealed, and put it into the pocket of his vest.

Taking care to make no sound, he moved to the window and carefully worked the sash open to its widest extent.

That done, he put a chair under it and prepared to take leave.

He listened.

No sound was to be heard within.

Putting his head out he listened again, and all was silence the most profound.

Satisfied, he began to worm his body through the small opening, and presently had succeeded in getting his head and shoulders through, with his face upward.

Pausing a moment, he continued pressing through, and at last came as far as his knees, holding fast to the lower sash with his hands the while.

In that position he stopped a moment to rest and listen.

Hearing nothing, he let go with his hands and swung down, hanging by his legs, and his hands came in contact with the ground.

It was an easy thing, then, to let go with his legs and turn over and land upon his feet, and he did it with scarcely any more noise than a cat would have made.

He was without his weapons, but he was free.

Knowing the direction he must take, he set forward immediately, taking the greatest care that his steps were too light to be heard.

In a few moments he was out of hearing distance from the cabin, so far as his steps were concerned, and he then struck out at a rapid pace in the direction of the gulch.

He was going straight to the treasure cache to secure the treasure, and would then put all the distance possible between himself and the outlaws before daylight.

He could cache the money again, and in due time return with a posse and secure it.

"There will be something of a surprise when they find that I am gone, I imagine," he said to himself. "I would like to be there to see Captain Joaquin's face at the moment."

Not as a prisoner, however. He knew he would have no chance whatever for his life, or so, at any rate, he believed.

The night was dark, but there was enough light to see general outlines.

He pushed on, keeping to the trail as he remembered it, and he had taken good care to fix it well in his mind.

At length he came to the place where the duel was to have been fought but where he had been cut down by the bullet that had plowed the gash in his scalp.

Still on, and at last he came to the rough way that led to the top of the little peak on which the treasure had been cached, and here he had the hardest climb of all.

In daylight, it was not easy, but by night, and unfamiliar as he was with the ground, it was doubly difficult.

But it was at last accomplished, after an hour's work.

He stood on the plateau.

Sitting down on the edge of the table to rest, before proceeding further, a sound presently reached his ears.

It caused him a start, and he was on his feet instantly.

Again he heard it, and knew that he was not mistaken this time; it was voices.

With all haste he turned to the boulder and applied his shoulder to it at the point where Captain Joaquin had put his strength to it some hours before.

At first it did not move, but remembering how the Red Rover had put forth all his strength by surging against it, Dick now did the same, and presently the boulder moved and finally turned over.

Lighting a match, Dick looked into the cavity, and there was the bag of money exactly as it had been deposited.

He had it out in a second, and did not stop to replace the stone.

If he could get away from the top of the peak before discovered, he would have a chance.

It would take Captain Joaquin some time to climb up to look for the treasure, and while he was doing that Dick could be putting distance between himself and them.

What was the best of all, he would leave no trail that they could follow, having nothing but bare rock for his footing.

He readily imagined what had taken place at the cabin.

The men had come, and Captain Joaquin had entered the room to bring him forth and discovered him gone.

The first thought, naturally, would be for the money in the cache, and the Red Rover would lead the way thither with all speed—the very thing he was doing.

Moreover, they were even then nearer than Dick imagined, and just as he swung his legs over the edge of the plateau to begin the descent, the light of torches flashed out of the gulch below and his pursuers discovered him. With a wild shout, they opened fire upon him immediately.

Deadwood Dick was in a death-trap.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK'S ONLY DEFENSE.

"Surrender!" called out Captain Joaquin.

"We'll consider that point a bit first," responded Dick.

He had drawn back out of range with considerable alacrity, for the bullets had come uncomfortably close.

"You will surrender, and that unconditionally, or we will riddle you with bullets!" was the threat. "You have now cancelled any obligation I may have been under."

"If I surrender at all, it will be under conditions," rejoined Dick. "We will make terms, or I will fight it out to the death."

"It will be to your death, then, not mine."

"Don't be too sure of that."

"You are not armed."

"No?"

"No, you are not."

"Do you want me to show you? You present a fine target there where you stand."

There were five men in the company, four besides the captain, and those four sprang to cover instantly, lest a shot might find them.

Captain Joaquin laughed.

"Don't be alarmed, boys," he said.

"I tell you he is not armed. I took his guns away from him, and he has had no chance to get others. We must have him down from there!"

"There is only one way to get me," said Dick.

"And we will take that way."

"At your peril."

Captain Joaquin was no coward. He started forward at once, calling on his men to follow.

The men responded, reassured by the word of their leader, as well as by his own intrepid example, and followed the Red Rover up the steep ascent with their torches.

"Hold!"

Deadwood Dick so ordered.

They stopped and looked up, as men in their position naturally would do.

"You will advance another step at your peril," Dick warned them. "I am safe from your bullets, but you are in plain open sight there, and it seems a pity to pick you off."

"That be hanged!" cried Captain Joaquin. "You are talking to gain time, that is all. Come on, boys!"

"Do you want this boulder rolled down upon you?" cried Dick.

It was useless for him to pretend that he was armed, when he was not armed. A shot would have been the only proof of that.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the captain. "Four men like you could not roll that boulder out of the cavity in which it lies. I tell you we have got you, and you can't escape us."

There was not a doubt of it.

It was all true, what was said of the boulder. It weighed a ton if it weighed a pound.

The reason that one man was enabled to move it at all was because it was partly balanced in the little basin in which it rested, and could be tilted to another bearing in one direction.

"Hold!"

Dick's voice rang out again, more forceful than at first.

Again his foes stopped, for they were in no position to disregard such a command from a desperate man.

"Well, what now?" demanded the Red Rover.

"I told you that we would make terms, or I would fight it to the death."

"Bah! what care I for your threats? What position are you in to talk of terms? You are as good as in my hands already. Come on, boys!"

"One moment," cried Dick. "It is true that I have no guns at hand, as you well know, and it is also true that I cannot roll the boulder, but I have a weapon nevertheless."

"What is it?"

"This bag of money."

"Ha! ha! ha! What is that?"

"I will tell you what it is. It is a fortune in compact form. If I set a match to its contents it will go up in smoke."

There was a howl instantly.

"And I can do it before you can get up to a level where you can get a shot at me," said Dick. "All you will find will be a little heap of ashes for your trouble."

"You do not dare!" howled the Red Rover. "You would not have the nerve to destroy such a fortune!"

"No?"

"No! I defy you!"

"All right, come on and see. It will take you several minutes to get here, and by that time I can have destroyed it."

"But, what of you? By heavens, I would put pitch on you and burn you at the stake, Deadwood Dick! You do not know the tiger of my nature yet, or you would not rouse it."

"I am seeking rather to tame it," said Dick.

"And I swear that I will do just as I say, if you destroy that money before I can get hold of it."

"I would prefer a leap off this peak to the depths below, rather than that," said Dick, "and I could carry with me what of the money I might not have time to burn."

"You would not do that."

"There is one way for you to prove it, come and see."

"You have no matches there."

"Here is proof of that."

Dick struck a match as he spoke, and set fire to a piece of paper he happened to have in his pocket.

Captain Joaquin was dismayed.

Dick could hear him consulting in low tones with his men.

"What are you going to do about it?"

Dick inquired, after a pause. "I am ready to offer my terms."

He had a potent weapon to use against them, and that was the possession of the fortune they had risked so much to get possession of that day.

"Ready to offer terms," sneered the Red Rover. "You mean that you are ready to accept such terms as you can get, I guess. We will be the ones to offer, if any terms are made at all. We hold the winning hand."

"And I hold the stuff. Don't make any mistake."

"Well, what would you call terms?"

"If I surrender to you, with this bag of money intact, will you allow me to go free?"

"Yes, we'll do that," was the prompt answer. And every one of them voiced approval. They were prompt and liberal with their promises, if he would surrender at once.

Deadwood Dick laughed at them.

"It is too plain a case," he said.

"That is not the kind of a bargain I am going to make with you, however."

"You won't trust us?"

"Not a bit."

"You will have to, or we will starve you out. And at the first sight we get of you we'll pick you off."

"Try that, my friends, and every hour I remain here I will burn ten thousand dollars of this money. I have got money to burn, not only figuratively, but actually."

"Curse you! What terms do you want?"

"Ha! I thought you would presently recognize that I hold the better hand," said Dick.

"I recognize nothing of the kind," was the return, "but I don't want you to be fool enough to destroy that money—my hard earnings."

"That is precisely the little joker I hold," said Dick.

"Well, what do you want to do?"

"I want you to return my revolvers to me, in good order—"

"Say, do you take us for fools altogether? We have got the advantage, now, and we mean to keep it. Forward, men, and at him!"

"Hold!" cried Dick yet once again. "You evidently forget the fate of this money if you advance another step. And more than that, if you keep me here one hour the pile will be ten thousand dollars less."

It was a peculiar situation.

CHAPTER XII.

CAUGHT IN THE TOILS.

Deadwood Dick was in a desperate fix. He did not see any way of escape, no matter which way he looked.

Having been there in the daylight, he knew there was no way down save in the one direction.

And in that direction the way was blocked by the outlaws, who would shoot him on sight as they would shoot a dog that might offend them.

They had the advantage of him in every way save one only. He held them in momentary check by his threat to destroy the prize they were after, and which, according to their code, belonged to them.

There was another consultation among them.

Then Captain Joaquin called out:

"Deadwood Dick?"

"Well?"

"We have to admit that you have got the best of it at present. We are willing to make terms with you."

"Well, you have heard one of the conditions."

"Yes, but that would be to place still more advantage on your side. We can't afford to arm you against ourselves, you know."

"That is one of the conditions, nevertheless, and I want to tell you that you are letting valuable time get away from you. I mean business when I say I will burn this stuff."

"Don't do that; we'll come to an agreement somehow."

"What do you propose, then?"

"You come down here with that cash, and we'll give you the chance I told you about."

"The drawing for a white bean?"

"Yes."

"What assurance have I that I will not be shot at sight?"

"None but our word. We'll respect that, if you are willing to meet us half way. We are determined to have that money."

"Joaquin?"

It was a woman's voice that called.

Dick recognized it as the voice of Susana, and wondered what had brought her there.

"What are you doing here?" cried Captain Joaquin, in something of anger. "I thought I told you to remain at the house."

"Yes, but I could not do that, with you in danger. I had to come out and find you. Do not be angry with me; I could not help it. Besides, I was anxious about your treasure."

She had come out into sight, while speaking.

Deadwood Dick was peering over the edge of the ledge, at a point where a shadow protected him.

He saw the young woman cast a swift glance around, saw that she was nearly out of breath from evident haste, and that her face was flushed.

"What danger am I in?" was the angry demand.

"No danger, I hope, but I could not know that. I could not remain there in uncertainty. Do not be angry, Joaquin."

"Well, sit down and rest yourself, and do not interfere in this matter. Now, Deadwood Dick, let me know at once what you will do or what you want us to do."

"If you will return my revolvers to me, in good order and loaded, I will come down and turn this money over to you, on condition that you let me escape with my life, or give me a fair chance to do so. It is for you to accept or refuse, as you please."

"We refuse."

"Very well, then; this money goes up in smoke."

"Heavens!" cried the young woman. "Do not burn the money, sir, I beg of you!"

"It is the only weapon I have," declared Dick. "Without it, I could not hold your cutthroats at bay for a moment. With it I must bargain for my life."

"Perhaps you regret the chance you gave me," suggested Joaquin.

"No, I do not. I was simply giving you the benefit of a possible doubt, though, in truth, I did not believe it existed."

"And what do you promise him now, Joaquin?" the young woman inquired.

"I have promised him his life if he will come down here with that money," the Red Rover explained.

"You had better accept it, sir," the young woman called out. "You are at a disadvantage, and cannot possibly hold out there a great while. That is your only chance."

"But I have only the word of an outlaw that my life will be spared."

"That word will be kept, will it not, Joaquin?"

"Of course it will be kept. But I told you not to meddle in this matter. Keep out of it, now, or return to the house at once!"

The young woman gave him a sharp glance, and leaned back against a boulder that lay behind the stone on which she had sat down. Dick believed that he caught a look of pain on her face as the torches lighted it up.

"It is all one-sided," said Deadwood Dick. "Arm me, and make me an equal, and I will leave the bag of money here and come down and go away. Refuse, and I will carry out the threats I have made. There need be no further parley about it."

"Well, I'll do it, but I have not got your weapons here."

"Send for them."

"It will take time to get them."

"No matter, we can call a stay of proceedings until your man returns with them."

"And you will destroy none of the money mean time?"

"No, I will not."

"Agreed."

Captain Joaquin spoke a few words to one of his men, and the fellow started off.

Deadwood Dick withdrew from the edge of the ledge then, and put on his thinking cap. The advantage lay with the outlaws, there was no denying it. He did not believe they would be fools enough to arm him.

There must be some trick in it, he believed, but what it could be he could not imagine. He looked around for a means of escape, but knowing full well that it did not exist. He would have to trust to the word of the outlaw captain, and take chances.

No word was passed between Captain Joaquin and him during the time the man was gone, and Dick waited eagerly for the fellow's return. He had a scheme in mind, but whether it could be made to work or not remained to be seen. It would be at the risk of his life, but he hoped to give them the slip and get away with the booty.

At last he came.

Captain Joaquin called out to Dick, and he responded.

"Here are your weapons, now, but how are they to be sent up to you? And what assurance have we that you will keep your word?"

"I have a plan to propose," said Dick. "Let that lady bring them up to me, and she may carry the bag down to you in exchange. Then, when you find that it is all right, all go away and leave me to come down when I please."

That, however, was not his scheme.

"What is the sense of that?" demanded the Red Rover. "I will bring them up myself."

"And perhaps shoot me the moment you come where you can get a bead on me. I will not trust you that far, Captain Joaquin, for I do not believe you mean to allow me to get away from here if you can help it."

"But you have my word that you shall be allowed to go away alive—that is, that your life will be spared."

"And he will keep his word, sir," spoke up the woman.

"You have nothing but his promise, the same as I," said Dick. "He must meet my terms, or I will carry out the threat I have made. It can only cost my life, anyhow and—"

A noise just behind him caught Dick's ear at that instant, and he turned his head to see what it was, when a man threw himself upon him and bore him to the ground. Dick, already kneeling, was taken at a disadvantage, and he was shoved headlong over the ledge.

Even as he felt himself going, the

thought came to him to protect his head with the bag of money, and so he did, holding it tight to his head and drawing himself into as much of a ball as possible, for there was not the least use in his trying to save himself the fall down the rugged side of the cliff. And so he fell, over and over, landing at the feet of Captain Joaquin.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEADWOOD DICK BRANDED.

A shout of exultation had accompanied Dick's hasty departure from the cliff, and a burst of laughter greeted him from below.

The instant he landed, for the moment more dead than alive, ready hands seized him and a pistol was clapped to his head, and Captain Joaquin snatched away the bag of money.

This the Red Rover opened immediately, to make sure that its contents were intact.

"What is to be done with him?" one of his men demanded.

"You know who he is," was the response.

"Yes, he is Deadwood Dick."

"And what is he to us? What is he to all of our class?"

"That's so. Death to him, boys; death to Deadwood Dick! Where is the rope?"

"Hold on," spoke up the young woman, who had leaped to her feet at the shout from the cliff. "You promised him his life, Joaquin."

"If he came to my terms, yes, but he did not do that. He is our foe, Susana, and he must die. The world is not wide enough to hold us and him, after this night's work."

"That's so," shouted the men. "Death to Deadwood Dick!"

"Hang him," said the captain.

Dick was jerked upon his feet roughly, and his hands were speedily tied behind his back.

Mean time the young woman had thrown herself upon her knees before Captain Joaquin, pleading for his life, reminding him of the chance Dick had given him for his.

"Get up, fool!" the Red Rover sternly ordered. "Have you taken leave of your senses? Let him escape, and we are done for. No, he dies, here and now, and no more fooling about it. Get up, I say, and do not anger me against yourself, Susana!"

"But your promise," she reminded, rising.

"That for it," with a snap of the fingers.

"But I had always looked upon your spoken word as sacred, and now—"

"See here, what is this man to you, Susana?" was the rough demand, laying a hand on her shoulder.

"I am not thinking of him, but of you, Joaquin. I do not want to think of you as a murderer—a murderer! I am afraid—I believe—I know it would set me against you."

"Bah! you are a woman. Get out of the way, now, for business is business. He has got to die—"

"Joaquin, for my sake—"

"No!"

"For my love—"

"By heavens! I begin to think there is more to it than you would express. Men, an example shall be made of this fellow. I'll brand him before we hang him!"

The young woman uttered a scream.

"Ha! I thought so," the Red Rover sneered. "A woman's heart is as fickle as the weather. This fellow's make-be-

lieve chivalry has stolen your affection from me—"

"No! no! no! Great heavens! how you wrong me!"

"Ha! ha! Then what is the matter with killing him, since he is my mortal foe, and it must be his life or mine sooner or later?"

"But, your honor, Joaquin, your honor," she reminded him. "He gave you your life, or a chance for it, and you pledged your word that you would do the same—"

"Bah! Choose between us, Susana."

"I choose you, of course," attempting to throw her arms around his neck, an action which he repelled. "He is nothing to me; I only want to see your honor preserved."

"Bah! You think to blind me. What can we brand him with, boys? He shall go to the devil with a mark of Captain Joaquin's compliments!"

"Hurrah! That is what he deserves!"

"Here is a horseshoe; will that do?"

"The very thing!"

"It will give him a mark for good luck!"

"Joaquin! In heaven's name show mercy! If you do this thing, you kill my love for you at a single stroke."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

He pushed her roughly away from him.

"At least do not torture him," she cried. "At least spare him that, I beg, I implore."

"And all because he has stolen your affection from me," he cried, with jealous intensity. "Yes, I will spare him; another word from you, and I will burn out his eyes!"

With a scream, the young woman covered her face with her hands and staggered away from the scene.

"Where is that horseshoe?" the enraged captain demanded. "Put these torches together, and lay it on them till it is heated. I will make an example of Deadwood Dick that will be a warning to all other detectives to steer clear of Captain Joaquin!"

The horseshoe was handed forward, and the torches were placed together as ordered, and the iron laid upon them. Then, while two of the cutthroats fanned the blaze with their hats, two more threw Dick to the ground and tore open his shirt in front, baring his breast.

Wonderful to say, Dick had received no broken bones by his fall down the ragged side of the cliff.

He had spoken no word, seeing the uselessness of it.

The young woman stood at some distance away, wringing her hands, but afraid to say any further word for fear that Captain Joaquin would carry out his more terrible threat.

All were silent, and the fire was fanned until at last the shoe began to take on the color of the flame.

"How hot do you want et, captain?" one of the scoundrels asked.

"That will do," was the answer. "How will you handle it, though? A stick will do, however."

"Yes, or a rifle barrel. Say when you are ready, and we'll give him sech a brand as will identify him hereafter when we meet him down below. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"Get ready."

"All ready, cap'n."

"One moment, then. Susana?"

He called out to the young woman.

"I hear you; Joaquin."

"Come here and see how I treat a rival when I catch him."

"No, no! Spare me that, Joaquin, spare

me that! He is no rival; it was only of you I thought!"

"Bah! you lie to me. I'll fetch you—ha! ha!"

He made a dash at her, but with another scream she turned and fled from sight.

Captain Joaquin returned laughing, and ordered the hot iron to be laid upon Deadwood Dick's bare breast, and a man brought it from the fire on the end of a rifle barrel.

"Anything to say, Deadwood Dick?" the Red Rover inquired.

"Only this," said Dick: "If you do this thing, you will be the object of my vengeance even in another world—I swear it."

"Bosh! Put on the brand, my man."

The barrel of the rifle was lowered, and the hot horseshoe slipped off and fell upon Deadwood Dick's bare skin.

The victim gave a convulsive movement as the hot iron touched his skin, and struggled furiously, an involuntary cry of anguish escaping his lips, but he was firmly held.

A second—perhaps two, and the report of a rifle rang out, and Captain Joaquin uttered a sharp cry and staggered. But only for a moment; he recovered himself, and, with hand pressed to his side, ran in the direction whence the shot had come, shouting back:

"That wildcat did it! But I will have her; you hang that fellow and come at once to the cabin." And he disappeared, while those who had been holding Deadwood Dick to the ground jerked him upon his feet, and the iron dropped off and fell to the ground, leaving its imprint upon the fair flesh of the intrepid prince of detectives!

CHAPTER XIV.

SUSANA TO THE RESCUE.

Deadwood Dick believed that the end of his eventful career had come at last.

There was not a ray of hope for him, and he was faint and sick from the intense pain of the hot iron that had been laid upon his breast.

With his hands tied, and his head swimming, he was powerless to resist his foes, and the rope was quickly placed around his neck and he was dragged in the direction of a tree near at hand.

He was not even asked if he had a last word to say. The end of the rope was thrown over the limb, the cutthroats caught hold of it and pulled, and Deadwood Dick, the fearless, the generous, was swung clear of the ground and the end of the rope was secured to the body of the tree.

"Is he to be shot as well?" demanded one of the villains.

"No, he ain't worth wastin' good powder and lead on," was the response from another.

"That's so," said a third. "Let him swing and think about et while his speer-it is workin' itself loose in ther shell."

"Come on; ther captain said come to ther cabin at once."

"Hooray! Good-by, Deadwood Dick!"

With whoop and yell they hastened from the scene of their dastardly outrage, and followed in the direction Captain Joaquin had taken.

Barely had they gone when a panting form sprang out of a crevice in the rocks. It was Susana.

With a suppressed cry she ran to the tree with all speed, and with a single sweep of a keen knife severed the rope.

Deadwood Dick dropped to the ground heavily, all limp and apparently lifeless, and the young woman was at his side in-

stantly, her eager fingers at work at the noose.

It was quickly loosened and removed. "He must not die, he shall not die!" she cried to herself. "I will save him for his revenge. You accused me of loving him, Captain Joaquin, wrongly accused me, but I will love him now, love him with my whole heart, for you have made me hate you—hate you!"

She lifted Dick's head and pressed warm and passionate kisses upon his face, believing he was wholly unconscious.

To her surprise her last kiss was returned.

She sprang up with a startled little cry, and released her hold instantly.

"I owe my life to you," said Dick, in low tone. "I shall not soon forget the obligation, I promise you."

"I regret that I could not save you the torture you had to undergo," was the response. "You heard his threats; I was afraid to say another word in your favor."

"I am glad that you did not do so. But release me quickly and let me get hold of my weapons—which they left yonder on the ground. They may return, and not only my life, but yours, is now at stake. There will be another reckoning before the account is closed."

She freed his hands even while he was speaking.

"Yes, there will be another reckoning," she said, in low, intense tones, "and in it I will be on your side. I hate him—hate him now as much as I ardently loved him before—or thought I loved him. How blind I was to his true character!"

"Do you know what is good for a burn?" Dick asked.

"Yes, yes; why did I not think of it? How you must suffer! Wait, I will dress that wound in a moment."

Snatching a brand from the fire in which the horseshoe had been heated, she sought eagerly around and plucked here and there a kind of weed that grew in the rock crevices.

While she was thus engaged, Dick secured his revolvers and also the horseshoe with which he had been branded.

The latter was still hot, of course.

Having gathered some of the weeds, the girl laid them on a stone and pounded them to a pulp, and, tearing a strip from an article of her linen, she spread the poultice upon it.

"Now, let me fix it," she said to Dick.

Dick sat down and bared his breast, and she applied the cooling pulp to the wound, the contact causing Dick to give a sigh of relief.

"That feels good," he said.

"It will soon draw out the fire," said the girl, "and it will aid the wound to heal quickly, too."

Securing the poultice in place as well as possible, she fastened Dick's shirt over it, and when she had done Dick took her in his arms and embraced her, returning the kisses she had given him.

"You have given me your life," he said; "what can I do for you in return?"

"Give me your protection," was the response.

"You shall have that, to the death."

"And let me aid you in your revenge against that monster. Ugh! how I hate him now!"

"But, he is your husband—"

"No, no, he was not my husband; I am free, as free as a bird. I loved him, and would have wed him, but I am thankful my eyes were opened before I was linked to him for life."

"Then you desire to escape him now?"

"Heavens! he would murder me now, after what I have done. Yes, yes, I desire to escape; I want you to protect me."

"Enough said," agreed Dick, giving her another embrace and releasing her. "I'll try and do something in return for the risk you have taken for me, and together we will hunt him down."

"At once?"

"No, we will let him feel secure for a time, and the blow will be all the greater when it falls. But—"

"What?"

"Are you to be depended on?"

"To be depended on? I do not understand you, sir."

"Call me Dick. I mean, will you hold out to the end, when it comes to the test?"

"Will I hold out—"

"Perhaps your love will rekindle, and you will bask my revenge when it comes to the hour—"

"No, no, a thousand times no! My hate is even more intense than was my love. No, no, I will not falter; I am now yours, if you will let me be yours, and our purpose is one."

"It is a bargain," said Dick. "Here is my hand, little pard."

The girl placed her hand in his.

"Hands up! both of ye!"

The voice was so near that both were startled, and Dick felt a gun behind his ear.

It was so sudden that Dick obeyed before the thought came to him to resist, but perhaps it was as well, for that might have meant his instant death.

"It is Booth!" cried the girl in dismay. "We are lost—lost!"

"Bet yer life ye are," said the man.

"Ye forgot to reckon me, I guess. Et took me a good while to worm up into that peak by the crevice inside and take this galoot by surprise, and et has took me a good while to git down again, but hyer I am and hyer you be, too."

"And what do you expect to do with us?" asked Dick, grimly.

"Take ye straight to Captain Joaquin, of course."

"Never!" said the young woman.

"I'll show ye. You turn—Ugghh!"

Deadwood Dick's foot had suddenly caught the fellow in the middle, and over he went with a grunt terrific.

No sooner had he fallen than the girl was upon him, and her knife was buried in his breast, straight and true, and the cutthroat stiffened out to rise no more.

"There is one less," she said, rising. "I never killed a human before, but I would kill a score rather than be taken back to that man. Thank heaven, we are free yet, Dick. Do you want further proof of my devotion to you? Can you ask it?"

"I did not ask anything more than your word, Susana. You are a pard worth having. We will hang this fellow to the tree where they hanged me, and should they come this way again they will believe that Deadwood Dick is still there where they left him, and the surprise will be all the greater when the blow falls, as fall it must."

CHAPTER XV.

BANKER BROWN, OF POWDER POCKET.

Meantime, Captain Joaquin had gone straight to the cabin.

He believed that Susana would go there to gather up some effects before trying to run away.

Of course he knew, or believed, that the shot had been fired at him by her,

and that only confirmed the suspicion he had formed against her.

Had he caught her, a horrible fate would have been hers. Smarting under the wound she had given him—for the bullet had lodged in his shoulder—he was in the right mood to wreak vengeance.

But he failed to find her.

There was no sign of her at the cabin, no indication that she had been there—in fact, the servants declared that she had not been there.

Back he started, and had gone but a little way when he met his men coming, and he scattered them all to look for the missing young woman, with orders to take her dead or alive.

They went out by the various trails—rather possible avenues, for there were no trails proper there, but they failed to find her. And when Captain Joaquin and two of the men came out at the place where Dick had been hanged, they found his body swaying to and fro in the breeze.

Nor was she found. And when, later on in the night, others of the band came in in haste with certain intelligence concerning the sheriff and his posse, Captain Joaquin deserted his cabin and took to the hills, and was not seen in that section again. On the following day the cabin was discovered and looted and burned, but the birds had flown.

Meanwhile, Deadwood Dick, with Susana, was making his way to the south, keeping to the hills in order not to be discovered.

Dick wanted it to appear that he was dead.

He learned enough from Susana to give him a suspicion as to what Captain Joaquin would do, and he felt that he could afford to give him time.

They crossed the border into Mexico, where Dick quietly rested for a season to recover his full measure of health and strength, and where Susana was his devoted slave and companion.

Inquiry was being made in every direction for Deadwood Dick.

It was known that the last case he had undertaken was the hunting down of Captain Joaquin, or the Red Rover, and it was feared that he had met his death at the hands of that cutthroat and his band.

Dick remained in hiding, and thus Captain Joaquin, wherever he might be, would be lulled into the confirmation of his belief that Deadwood Dick was no longer to be feared. In fact, that worthy was chuckling to himself, whenever a newspaper item concerning Dick met his eye. He believed that he alone, and those of his men who had been in the secret, could solve the mystery.

And so time passed on.

Powder Pocket was a roaring camp.

It was at the top notch of the biggest kind of a boom.

It had been a paying camp from the first, with rich mines on every hand.

New finds, too, were being reported almost daily, and people and money were flowing in as freely as water flowed down from the snow-capped peaks.

The newest institution of which Powder Pocket could boast was a bank. It was a private concern, had been opened on a grand scale, and was being conducted on a paying basis. Money could be had in almost any amount, on big interest and bigger security.

The head of this institution was one Sigmund Brown.

He had come to Powder Pocket about six months prior to the time of this introduction of the camp.

Settling down quietly, he had rented one of the best buildings in the place, refitted it in fine style, and one morning his sign was found adorning the front—S. Brown, Banker.

He had a game in contemplation.

He had money, the other fellows had the property. They could not do anything without money.

His money was on call, as said, but every loan was vouched for by an iron-clad mortgage, and it was his boast that in five years he would own the town.

The interest was high, the loan was not sufficient, in most cases, to develop beyond the mere beginnings, and on the day when the interest could not be met nor the principal paid, he would foreclose.

He was there to double—to treble his pile, and he made no secret among his intimates of his means.

One day a miner entered his private office in an excited state.

The private office was always open to those who came on particular business, and this man had announced that his business was of the utmost importance.

The clerks in the main room had seen his kind before, often, and he was readily admitted. He was, undoubtedly, a man who had struck it rich and was eager to mortgage and begin working the claim.

He was a bearded fellow, roughly clad, and was begrimed from hat to boots with mud and clay.

"You aire Mr. Brown?" he eagerly demanded.

"Yes, sir, I am Mr. Brown. What can I do for you, sir?"

"I have struck it rich—so all-fired rich that it has 'most turned my head. I want you to look at my find, which I have registered all correct, and lend me a loan on it so I kin open et up."

"That so? I congratulate you. Where does it lie?"

"Hardly out of gunshot from the camp, and it is the prince of 'em all, I'm bettin'."

"It will be a pleasure to me to look at it, the first opportunity, and if it is what you think, there will be no trouble about your getting a loan, I guess."

"No trouble at all, I'm bettin'. You will open yer eyes when ye see et."

"What do you consider it worth?"

"Seventy-five thousand, if a cent."

"And how much of a loan would you want?"

"Twenty-five thousand—"

"Whew!"

"What's the matter?"

"That is steep. I have never gone over ten thousand into the best of them."

"But I tell ye this is the best of the bunch. You will say so when ye see it, and you won't hesitate a minnit to fork et over, either."

"I must see it first of all. In a day or two—"

"Can't wait. I am in a fever. You must come with me to-day—right now!"

"Impossible; I can't—"

"I will pay ye, boss. Why, it opens up bigger'n that Castleville Bank shelled out a year ago, and I ain't hardly cracked the ground yet."

The banker had become suddenly pale.

He was a man with long hair, and wore a mustache and goatee, and was altogether a good-looking man.

"What do you mean?" he asked, huskily, striving hard to remain composed. "Where is Castleville? What do you suppose I know about any bank business at Castleville?"

"Castleville? Why, they closed the bank, you know, and set out to remove

the funds to 'Frisco, but Captain Joaquin got wind of it and held up the train and scooped the pile. Not only that, but it is believed that he murdered a detective about the same time."

"A detective?"

"Yes; a chap they called Deadwood Dick."

The man's face had grown paler, and he was eyeing the caller sharply.

"Well, all that is nothing to me," he declared. "I will go with you to-morrow morning, start at eight o'clock."

"And then I'll show you the richest thing you ever saw in your life, if Captain Joaquin don't gobble it mean time and get away with it—Why, what's the matter?"

The banker's face was deathly.

"Nothing," he answered. "I am not exactly well to-day. Come in the morning, and I will be prepared to go with you. Then, when I have had the property passed upon by experts, your loan will be advanced. You must excuse me, but I am very busy to-day—Great heavens!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FIRST BLOW STRUCK.

The caller had suddenly torn the beard from his face and flung it to the floor.

It was the face of Deadwood Dick, handsome, grim, and he looked the quailing banker in the eyes as he stood before him.

"Do you know me, Joaquin Escala?" he demanded.

"N—no, I do not know you. And you call me by a name not my own. Leave my office."

"You fail to recognize me, Captain Joaquin? Then I must show you a proof of identity that you cannot fail to recognize. Behold!"

Deadwood Dick tore open his shirt and exposed the brand of a horseshoe.

There it was, never to be effaced, the brand of a horseshoe that had seared itself into the living flesh.

The man at the desk started to rise, but could not do so; he was like one partly paralyzed and partly bereft of reason. He could only stare.

"Well, I see you recognize me now," said Dick.

"I deny it," was the gasped response. "You are a crazy man. You are a lunatic. Leave my office, or I will not be responsible for your life—"

"Hold! If you reach for a gun, or attempt to call assistance, it will signal your instant death, Red Rover. You and I have a little account to settle and we must have a chat."

"I tell you you are mistaken."

"I know that I am not. Let us not dwell upon that, but come right to the point. You cannot hope to make me doubt what I know to be a fact. Now, what vengeance do you suppose I will take upon you for this?"

"I tell you you are making a mis—"

"I made one mistake once with you, but will not make another. You left me for dead, but Providence was not done with me yet—nor with you."

Perspiration was standing out upon the man's forehead.

"How can I convince you—"

"That you are not Captain Joaquin?"

"Yes, yes."

"Bare your right arm, and if it contains no scar, around from the shoulder and diagonally to the elbow, then you are not Captain Joaquin."

"Curse her! it was Susana told you that!"

"Now, perhaps we can come to busi-

ness. I will sit down, and you will observe silence and keep your hands in plain sight on your desk."

Dick had a gun in hand, and was ready to use it instantly.

"We must come to terms," said the banker.

"And those terms will be mine," said Dick.

"Name them, then."

"Give me, in funds, the amount that was taken from the express train that day."

"Good heavens! it is more than I have got at my command on short notice like this. I could not do it if my life depended on it."

"Your life does depend on it."

"I must have time."

"You have just time to produce it, no more."

There was a steely glitter in Deadwood Dick's eyes.

This ex-outlaw quailed before him, and Dick saw that he would yield to the demand.

"I must speak to my cashier," he said.

"Not necessary," said Dick.

"Otherwise I cannot procure the funds—"

"It will not go down, sir. I will step with you into the other room, and there you will open the safe and hand out the amount."

A look of relief came suddenly into the entrapped outlaw's eyes.

Deadwood Dick read his thought. A smile curled his lips as he thought of the further surprise in store for the rascal if he acted upon the idea that had come into his mind.

"I will do that," said the outlaw.

"Very well, get up and precede me."

The man rose from his chair, taking care not to let it appear that he had any thought of reaching for a weapon.

He believed—he knew that would signal his instant death, after the treacherous manner in which he had dealt with Deadwood Dick on the former occasion, and he could not risk it.

Going to the door, he opened it, and the instant it was opened he leaped out, shouting:

"A robber! Shoot him!"

A woman was before him.

Strange men were in possession of the bank. Each of them had a badge on his breast.

Captain Joaquin looked around him in dismay, and his face turned even more deathly pale than ever, if possible.

The woman was Susana.

She was pale, but her face was determined.

With a quick movement the rascal reached for a pistol, but Deadwood Dick was upon him instantly.

"No you don't," he cried. "Whether you meant to shoot her or yourself, is all the same. Neither life can be spared just yet. Johnson, disarm him."

One of the deputies stepped forward and did so.

The clerks in the bank looked on with open-mouthed amazement. And as each of them had a man over him with a gun, they believed it to be a robbery.

As soon as relieved of his weapons, the fellow was allowed to go, and Dick again ordered him to produce the money from the safe, or order his cashier to do so in his stead.

He refused to obey.

"Then we must help ourselves," said Dick. "Bryce, you were express-agent at that time, and know the sum that was sent from the Castleville bank that day. Take the same sum from this safe now."

Another of the deputies stepped forward and entered the safe for the purpose.

He brought forth bundle after bundle of the funds, until he had the required amount in a pile on the nearest table.

"Is that right?" asked Dick.

"Yes, according to the markings."

"And that is no doubt correct. Pack it up for transportation."

This the man proceeded to do, with the utmost care and security, and at last it was done and they were ready to depart.

"Now, Mr. Brown," said Deadwood Dick, then, "we will take our leave. You know the justice of this visit, and why we have withdrawn by force a certain deposit that was in your hands."

"Curse you!"

"We can go further, but the time is not ripe. This is only the beginning of your retribution."

"You are robbers! This is only a trick to serve your purpose! I will have a posse after you within ten minutes after your departure!"

"Will you?"

"I swear it!"

"Then perhaps we had better end the business now. Shall I arrest you, make known your true name here, and let the citizens of this camp deal with you as you deserve?"

"Go, and make the best of what you have got. We will meet again some day, and then—"

"And then," said Dick, grimly.

He gave his men a signal and they left the room, then Susana, and last of all, Dick.

At the door he stopped for a last word with the outlaw, upon whom had fallen the first blow of a just vengeance.

"This is but the beginning," Dick said. "You know what to expect at my hands. I have drawn a cordon around you that you cannot hope to escape, and it is only a matter of time."

"Ha! I know you now!" was the last desperate ruse. "You are Captain Joaquin, the outlaw!"

"Perhaps I am," said Dick.

He withdrew, and went down the street. Susana was with him.

The others, somehow, had disappeared already, and after these two turned a corner, they, too, were seen no more.

It was as if the very earth had opened and taken them in. And when, a little later, the hue and cry of a daylight robbery was raised, not a vestige of the robbers could be found.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SECOND BLOW FALLS.

Powder Pocket was all excitement.

Banker Brown declared it was Captain Joaquin who had made the raid.

Not that he knew that worthy by sight, but so, he declared, the robber chief had admitted in private.

The clerks could not dispute this, although their impression had been that the persons who made the raid were regular officers of the law, and their side of the story got out.

This, the banker averred, had been but a clever trick, in case of discovery by citizens during the time they were in the bank. It had been one of the most remarkable bank robberies on record. The bank, however, could stand it, Mr. Brown declared, and would not close its doors.

About a month prior to this time there had come to Powder Pocket a man, who called himself Card-Sharp Cale.

Who he was, more than that, no one knew.

He was very dark of skin, almost as swarthy as an Ethiopian, had long hair and a beard of almost equal length.

With him was a younger man, his brother, of similar complexion, some years the junior of the other and beardless, save for a slender mustache that became him well.

These two had opened a gaming establishment.

It was a place where faro ruled, and their bank was declared to be practically limitless.

After a consultation with Banker Brown, on coming to Powder Pocket, this Card-Sharp Cale had deposited fifty thousand dollars in Brown's bank, subject to order.

It had been no uncommon thing for checks of from five to twenty thousand to be presented there of a morning, but the deposits, as a rule, had been greater than the withdrawals, and so, at the time of the robbery, Card-Sharp Cale had about a hundred thousand dollars on deposit.

On the morning after the robbery he dropped in at the bank.

"How is your concern after your loss?" he made inquiry, when greetings had been exchanged.

"It is all right," was the answer. "I have plenty of funds on hand yet that the devils did not find. They took only what was in sight."

"I understand they demanded a certain sum."

"Yes, so they did. They thought that was my pile. That, by the way, was the capital I started with, and they must have heard of it in some manner. But I have doubled it since, to say nothing of your big deposit, and others."

"Then you are ready to meet big checks?"

"Yes, we are all right."

"Because, as I was going to say, luck went against me last night and my bank went broke."

The banker paled.

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes. My checks are out to the tune of some sixty thousand dollars."

"Whew! Beaten at your own game. This is serious; I must find out just what we have got on hand at once."

He went into the outer room, and his caller smiled as the door closed after him. There was something familiar about that smile, now that Card-Sharp Cale was alone.

When the banker returned his face was like death.

"I am in a hole," he declared. "A check has just been paid to the tune of thirty-four thousand, and there is not five thousand left on hand."

"This is serious, Mr. Brown. I have got to have my balance, or I shall have to close my game to-night for want of funds. You must gather in all you can and make me whole."

"What is your balance, less this check I speak of?"

"It must be fifty thousand."

"I can't do it, on short notice; you will have to give me time. Will you force me to the wall?"

"You can pay or you cannot pay, and in the latter case you are at the wall already. There is nothing for me to do in the matter; I must have what is due me."

"Give me a week."

"Impossible! Think of the loss to me."

"Then give me three days—two days, one! I tell you I am unable to meet your demand."

"You must close your doors, then."

"And that will ruin me."

"You are ruined already."

"And you will not spare me?"

"How can I, and why should I?"

"As one man to another, you should."

"And see my own business ruined. No, no; that is not business, as business goes. I must have what is due me; and, besides my deposit I have been accepting papers of yours, believing them to be perfectly good, and they will make up a nice sum."

Brown wiped the perspiration from his face.

"What can I do?" he asked.

"There is only one thing you can do."

"And that is—"

"Convey your property here to me for security."

"And go forth a beggar?"

"Can I help that?"

"Be merciful."

"Do you show mercy?"

"I would, were our positions changed."

"What about that loan made to Hiram Smith which you foreclosed only a few days ago?"

"He is a beat; he never meant to pay."

"I do not believe that. Had I known of it in time I would have saved him. For a few paltry hundreds you scooped in his property worth thousands."

"That was business; he could not pay, and—"

"Ah! you see where you are, don't you? This is business, as I said. It is your own kind of business. Can you square accounts with me, Mr. Brown, if I give you an hour?"

"Impossible."

"Then I must take possession here, and will send at once for the proper authorities."

"You will take charge? By what right?"

"By the right of might."

"You cannot trust me, then, an hour?"

"Not a minute. Practically, you are my prisoner."

The ex-outlaw flushed, and his hand sought his hip, but he was covered in a trice by a brace of guns.

"No you don't!" was the cry. "Bring that hand up from there, and bring it up empty, too! Call in your chief clerk and tell him to close the bank and put up a notice!"

"I dare not; the people will mob me if I do that."

At that moment the door opened, and the cashier looked in, taking in the situation.

"A check for thirty thousand dollars, sir!" he said.

"It is yours," said Brown, turning appealingly to Card-Sharp Cale.

"I suppose it is."

"Can't you hold it back and give me a chance?"

"Not a minute. You have my money on demand; meet my paper or take the consequence."

"But, the robbery."

"Your loss, not mine."

"I could kill you, curse you!"

"Not a doubt of it; you have tried that before."

Instantly the man was upon his feet, and his visitor removed his long, curling beard.

Lo! it was Dick Bristol again! No mistaking that face, even though stained, as we have described. He smiled, and his revolvers covered the rascal's heart.

The cashier might have tried to interfere, but at that moment into the room slipped Card-Sharp Cale's brother, "Joe," he was called, and he, too, had a pair of guns in hand. And Joaquin Escala, utterly overcome, sank cowering upon his chair.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE THIRD STROKE.

Deadwood Dick was as inexorable as fate.

This the rascal knew, and he did not dare lift his head to ask further mercy.

"Well what shall it be?" asked Bristol. "Will you sign all over to me, or shall the expose be made here and now? I give you the choice."

"You will give me a chance?"

"I give you that choice. I intend to crush you by degrees."

"And if I do as you say—"

"I will give you a respite of twelve hours."

"I will do it. Cashier, tell that man the bank has to suspend. Put up a notice to close the doors."

"Yes, sir!"

"And say nothing about what you have seen in this room."

"Yes, sir!"

"And say to him, further, that he must return his check to the man who drew it," supplemented Card-Sharp Cale. The cashier withdrew.

"Now, pard," remarked Dick to Susana, for it was she, of course. "Go and bring here two lawyers. Be as quick as you can, and this business shall be done in proper fashion."

The girl withdrew, and Dick and his arch enemy were alone together.

Captain Joaquin was silent.

"When these lawyers come," explained the Dead-Set Detective, "you will be allowed to transfer your property by the name in which you hold it. Your real name need not yet appear. As I said, I give you a respite."

"And my liberty during that respite?"

"Yes."

"It is all I ask."

"And it is a great deal more than you deserve."

In due time the lawyers were ushered in, and both greeted Banker Brown servilely.

"Gentlemen," remarked the banker, "I am caught in a trap, and am obliged to wind up my affairs at once. I must transfer my possessions to this gentleman and—"

"Ahem!" interrupted one of the lawyers. "Forced to suspend, eh? You want a receiver, that is all; let him take your affairs and straighten them out as best he can. Or, declare yourself bankrupt, and let your creditors get what they can—"

"Probably Mr. Brown will do the business in his own way," suggested Deadwood Dick.

"Certainly, certainly!"

"The bulk of my obligation is to this gentleman—"

"All of it, I think," from Dick. "I have gathered up every scrap of your paper."

"Anyhow, I intend to deed over to him—"

"The sum of fifty thousand dollars," interrupted Bristol. "All the rest of your property, real and personal, you will transfer to Susana Maxton, without reserve—"

"He will do nothing of the kind!" asserted one of the lawyers. "There is a law in the land, sir, and—"

"And he will do as he pleases, eh?"

"It is forced."

"Ask him if it is."

"It is my will," avowed the cutthroat. "You will draw up papers according to my dictation, gentlemen."

That settled the point. The papers were duly drawn and signed and attested, and the second move in the great

game had been made successfully. But, there was another yet to follow.

It was night, and a man was softly stealing his way out of Powder Pocket.

"Banker Brown," ruined, was trying to elude his mortal foe, and he believed he could do so.

Little had been seen of Brown the remainder of the day, after the business transaction at the bank, and Card-Sharp Cale, and Joe, too, had disappeared.

In disguise, as a miserable, hungry outcast, Captain Joaquin was trying to escape with his life, with a bitter resolve in his heart that, sooner or later, he would square the account with his implacable foe, Deadwood Dick.

Out of camp he stole, unhindered, and off into the hills.

For a time he used caution, but, at last, feeling that escape was assured, he ran, and did not stop until he was nearly breathless.

"Curse you!" he panted, shaking his fist in the direction of the camp. "I have escaped, and you shall yet hear from me! Your inning this time, Dick Bristol, but mine will come!"

He fairly gnashed his teeth in his impotent rage.

"You are not done with Captain Joaquin," he vowed, in emphatic tone. "He will yet suck your life's blood from your veins—and yours, too, accursed Susana! It was all through you that this blow fell upon me. I will take to the road again; I will gather my men around me once more, and nothing shall stop my career."

Of a sudden light flashed upon the scene, and a woman stood before him—Susana—with a leveled revolver!

"I will not bear the blame that does not belong to me," she said, her voice firm, but her face pale. "There was a time when I could, and would, have followed you to death, but you blasted my love by your cruel suspicions. You wrongly accused me, and you would not show mercy where mercy was deserved. You turned my love to hate, and now I am your most bitter foe."

"Ha! ha! ha!" the outlaw laughed. "So, wildcat, it is you? I am glad we have met, for my vengeance must begin with you. Drop that gun, or, by the stars above, I will drop you!"

He dodged and drew his own weapons; but, in the same second, he was grabbed from behind by strong hands.

It was in vain he struggled.

"Did you hope to escape me?" asked Deadwood Dick. "You were a fool to think it. Do you know what is in store for you? Let me first bind your hands, and I will tell you."

Dick was not alone; there were other men besides himself, who held the prisoner while Dick bound him.

"There," he said, having tied the road-ruffian's hands, "now you are safe. Perhaps you remember what you did for me. Perhaps you remember this horseshoe. Perhaps you—"

Captain Joaquin uttered a scream.

"You do not mean to brand me!"

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," assured Dick.

"Anything but that—anything but that! Shoot me, hang me, but do not brand me!"

"Oh, it will hurt you no worse than it hurt me," averred Bristol, with a laugh. "If life is spared you, it may teach you a lesson of mercy to others. You are to be branded."

The wretch cried, begged to be spared; but all to no purpose. Dick called his men around him and told them the story, and his decision met their hearty ap-

proval. Not only so, but Susana exhibited no sign of pity or mercy for the cowering wretch.

A fire was made, and the horseshoe was heated.

"Now," announced Dick, when all was ready, "I will repay you in your own coin. This is the very same iron that branded me, and, while I do not fancy wearing a brand the same as yours—or allowing you to wear one similar to mine, rather—yet justice demands it. I feel again that iron searing my flesh; I feel again the rope around my neck; I hear again your mocking laughter, you execrable villain!"

"Have mercy! Have mercy!"

"Yes, I will have mercy; I will not hang you. I will give you your life. Hand me the iron!"

The victim writhed and screamed in anticipation of the acute agony he must suffer, as the iron was handed to Dick by a piece of wire caught in one of the nail holes.

Dick Bristol took the wire and held the red-hot shoe over the bare breast of his foe, smiling at his plea for mercy and his request for death at once, speedy and sure. He held it near enough for its heat to be keenly felt, and the cries of the craven wretch for mercy were indeed pitiful.

"Such mercy as you showed me!" reminded the detective. "I ought to brand your face with it instead of your breast. Suppose I lay it on your forehead and call you Cain? But, no, I will do no worse than you did to me. I will be merciful that far. When you feel it bite your flesh, when the smell of your own burning greets your nostrils, think of your own unmerciful act."

Dick moved as if to lay the shoe on the bare flesh, but hesitated. He glanced at Susana. She was standing by, her eyes on the ground, not a muscle moving. He recalled how she had pleaded for him, and contrasted her silence now. What were her thoughts? He looked again at his writhing victim, and allowed the voice within him to speak—the voice that had been struggling to be heard, yet which had been suppressed by his iron will.

"No, I will not!" he said, as if speaking to some one invisible to the others. "Let my punishment consist in showing mercy where mercy is not deserved."

As he spoke, he flung the hot iron as far as he could among the bushes and boulders.

"Thank God!"

"It was Susana, and she threw her arms around the detective's neck."

"Not that I care for him," she said; "he deserved it, and I would not have lifted a finger; but I thank God that you are more merciful!"

Dick kissed her, in turn, and ordered his men to lift the outlaw from the ground. This they did, and led him away. In due course the road-ruffian was found guilty and imprisoned for life.

When Susana came into the property which had been deeded to her, and had turned it into cash, Bristol saw her safely to her friends, and there took leave of her. She had been a true pard, and he almost loved her. That she did love him was not to be doubted, and if ever he wanted a true friend he knew where to find one.

THE END.

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